

# Blood of the Wind

by

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Story by

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FADE IN:

Fire CRACKLES over black. Eyes open. There is nothing but black and bright, burning eyes.

INT. INDUSTRIAL WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

A DARK FIGURE kneels beneath a Japanese scroll emblazoned with the image of a goddess holding a sword towards a crimson moon.

It is the only civilized arrangement in the room.

Chains, spears, blades - a massive assortment of weapons hang from the wall. This is the room of a dark warrior.

He unrolls a leather mat revealing black throwing spikes, ninja kunai (double-edged knives), four-pointed black shurikens (ninja throwing stars).

He paints his sword black then conceals it under his robe.

The light of a candle reveals the dark figure. He is HIROKU, 25, Japanese, with a hard jaw and a steady glare - the look of a street soldier.

Wooden prayer beads hang from his hands as he sits in meditation.

Outside, the blades of a passing police chopper SLASH through the night.

Hiroku cuts down the candles with his black sword. Darkness.

In the distance, the chopper blades beat LOUDER AND LOUDER. And then...

INT. SUBWAY TUNNEL - DAY

Splintered wooden sticks BEAT on a worn out, sticker-riddled bucket. The beat is DEAFENING. And then...the train steals the NOISE.

THREE KIDS, no older than 15, beat the buckets and HOLLER at passing pedestrians. A graffitied red sun rises on the wall behind them. There is a sense of danger but everyone seems used to it.

Neon lights spill onto broken concrete walls covered in worn out promises of illicit sex and decadence. A mural of a burning American flag stares back across the tracks.

INSERT TITLE: LOS ANGELES - NEAR FUTURE

(CONTINUED)

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A SMALL BOY stares in awe as he walks past a row of policemen in riot gear toting M-5 machine guns. His MOTHER grabs his face and turns it away.

MOTHER

Don't stare.

She looks at the guards with scornful eyes and says to herself.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

They'd eat you if they could.

As the mother continues walking, two slick-haired businessmen pass by in a hurried, fast-talking conversation.

BUSINESSMAN 1

I couldn't get a god damn penny out of that gook, slant-eyed Napoleon. And I got no choice.

BUSINESSMAN 2

They got their hands into everything. Didn't complain like the niggas or do our dirty laundry like the 'cans. They just got smarter and waited.

(beat)

Now it's their time.

BUSINESSMAN 1

Live with them or live without.

He smiles at a passing Japanese businessmen who doesn't smile back, BOSS TAKANA.

He is an older, squat man - his sunglasses stark like a setting sun and his fat fingers covered in expensive jewelry.

All except his missing pinky finger.

Flanking him on both sides are four younger, beefier thugs - - THE BODYGUARDS. Tattoos flow up their necks like overgrown vines. Clearly Yakuza.

Three Asian teenagers walk towards them. PUNKS. Spiked hair, tight rocker T-shirts. Real "I don't give shit grins" plastered all over their faces.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PUNK 1

My brother said he could have me running errands for those guys in two years. I'll be making more than my dad ever did in his whole life.

PUNK 2

And they'll kill you in another two.

PUNK 3

I always thought you had a hole between your legs.

Punk 1 SLAPS Punk 3 in the back of the head.

Through the throngs of the crowd Hiroku appears with his partner FOX, they are dressed as PRIESTS, donning black robes. Their presence is commanding but not distinguishable.

Prayer beads hang from their hands. They continually roll them into different arrangements - secretly communicating.

Across the station the four Yakuza are unsettling to everyday pedestrians. No one gets on their train and no one stands within spitting distance.

The train approaches and the doors open.

Standing next to the two priests, the young boy holds his mother's hand.

Hiroku looks down and puts his hand on the young boy's chest. He looks over at his mother and simply shakes his head "no". She gets it and pulls her son back.

Human traffic flows in and out of the train.

It bullets away, leaving behind the broken, vibrant station.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - CONTINUOUS

It's quiet with the exception of the occasional sound of a WHIMPERING BABY or MUSIC BLEEDING from headphones.

The priests stand slimmed up between the crowded masses.

The train car disappears into a dark tunnel. When it reappears...the priests are gone.

INT. YAKUZA SUBWAY CAR - CONTINUOUS

With the exception of the yakuza, the train car is empty. Two of the guards stand at the front and two next to Boss Takana.

The train again disappears. When it surfaces, Hiroku and Fox now stand where the guards had been.

Without hesitation, the two bodyguards draw long-barreled silencers and fire towards the priests.

The priests pull four-pointed ninja stars from underneath their robes. They slice through the air and deflect the bullets, sending them CRASHING through the window. WIND sweeps in.

Hiroku unravels the beads from his hand and hurls them toward the gangsters, grabbing Guard 1 by the neck.

Fox launches another attack of shurikens directly at Boss Takana.

Guard 2 steps in and catches a them in his bare hand and then comes at the priests, swathing his now sharply-clawed hand.

Choked by the beads, Hiroku violently pulls Guard 1 to the ground.

Fox avoids the attack of the Guard 2 with a flip, landing on the other side of him.

Boss Takana, still sitting rather complacently, pulls his cane to his lap and reveals a gun barrel at it's tip.

He fires at Fox, who ducks. Behind him the bullets rip through the chest of Guard 2, sending him crashing and bloody towards the exit door.

Hiroku quickly opens the door and kicks him out of the train. A loud THUD.

Guard 1 untangles himself from the beads but before he has a chance to stand up, he is finished off with a blow dart to the neck, he's done.

The commotion settles...there is nothing but the sound of the SWEEPING WIND.

Hiroku and Fox are motionless, like trees on a cliff's edge.

Boss Takana slouches into his usual, indifferent position.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOSS TAKANA  
(Japanese)  
So, the famous assassins of the  
Night. What do I owe the pleasure?

He laughs to himself.

HIROKU  
You know what we've come for.

Handcuffed to Boss Takana's hand is a black bamboo tube. He talks without even looking up.

BOSS TAKANA  
You know the first time you kill an  
innocent man, you lose the fear of  
your own mortality.

He looks up and smiles.

BOSS TAKANA (CONT'D)  
But you kill ten innocent men...you  
become immortal.

He reaches into his mouth, pulls a tooth out and swallows it.

BOSS TAKANA (CONT'D)  
One must always be prepared to  
destroy himself.

His mouth foams over as he rolls two canisters to the feet of the priests. Sarin gas pours out from them.

Hiroku and Fox pull black masks over their face, now truly looking like ninja.

Hiroku unsheathes his black ninja-to blade and slices Boss Takana's hand off, taking the bamboo tube with it. He then drives the sword into his chest. Leaving it stuck, leaving a message.

The ninjas leap out of the broken window and disappear into the dark tunnel.

The train barrels towards the next station, smoking with poison gas.

EXT. LOS ANGELES SUBWAY STATION - DAY

Fire trucks, police vans, ambulances. It's total chaos. People are being carried out of the underground tunnel on stretchers, covered in white foam.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The priests walk away from the confusion. As they turn the corner, they remove their robes, dropping them into a pile of blankets next to a homeless man.

Their faces now revealed. FOX is a bald, black, hard-boiled street mercenary.

A tinted black Mercedes sedan pulls up and the two men take a seat. The car speeds away into the smoggy city, the sun disappearing behind the towering buildings.

EXT. LOS ANGELES SKYLINE - DUSK

A black chopper SLICES over a very different L.A. Entire blocks of the city are decimated, smoke rises from burnt out buildings. Dodger stadium - half demolished, overgrown grass everywhere. The L.A. River looks like a Brazilian favela.

The skyline rises in the distance...a few Pagoda style skyscrapers stand tall. Giant digital billboards buzz with advertisements. A young, cute Asian girl blows kisses holding a can of carbonated sugary goodness.

The chopper winds through the buildings and lands on a helio-pad atop a half-constructed skyscraper.

EXT. UNFINISHED SKYSCRAPER - DUSK

An ESCORT opens the doors of the helicopter. Two sharply-dressed men make their way out. The guard yells over the BLADES of the chopper.

ESCORT

This way Mr. Mayor.

INT. UNFINISHED SKYSCRAPER - CONTINUOUS

Plastic sheets blow through the unfinished windows.

TWO BOSSES from the Iron Circle, a yakuza organization, step into the concrete room. They both sport Oyster Rolex's and Valentino suits. Their associates sit alongside them.

The mayor walks in with his entourage. He is mid 40's, Latino and dressed down compared to the Yakuza bosses.

He calmly sits.

MAYOR

Everyday I am overwhelmed by what my city has become...

He looks the two bosses square in the eyes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAYOR (CONT'D)  
 ...but this is not a war zone.

BOSS 1  
 We understand your concern, Mr.  
 Mayor.

Boss 1 maintains his calm. Boss 2 taps his fingers on the table, anxious.

MAYOR  
 We have maintained a very delicate balance and I have made it clear that the interest of your organization is important to this city.

He pauses and takes a sip of water.

MAYOR (CONT'D)  
 But if you want to act like thugs  
 ...I will treat you like thugs.

Boss 2 can't control himself.

BOSS 2  
 With all due respect...we have explained that this incident was caused by rogue actions within our organization.

Boss 1 cuts him off...maintaining diplomacy.

BOSS 1  
 This matter will be swiftly taken care of, sir. And we hope to continue our amicable relationship.

MAYOR  
 Let's just hope for your sake this is an  
 (pause)  
 isolated incident.

The mayor nods to the table of bosses and exits.

Boss 2 is fuming.

BOSS 2  
 (Japanese)  
 Fuck him. He thinks he owns us.  
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BOSS 2 (CONT'D)

He was a fucking bum before we fixed that election. We should crush him.

BOSS 1

No, we will maintain our diplomacy. At least we know what to expect with him.

A lackey whispers into Boss 1's ear.

BOSS 1 (CONT'D)

Bring him in.  
(to Boss 2)  
Takashima.

TAKASHIMA'S entrance makes the entire room uncomfortable. He clearly stands out among the robust businessmen donning a red kimono and a long grey beard. His gaze is sinister but wise. He is the leader of the Night Clan, the assassins of the Iron Circle.

BOSS 1 (CONT'D)

We respect your need to be discreet but an important matter is at hand.

Boss 2 is anxious to interject. He raises his voice.

BOSS 2

It seems there has been an unauthorized hit.  
(to Takashima)  
It has caused unnecessary friction.

Boss 1 again interjects...cutting down his comrade's rant.

BOSS 1

The politics between our organizations are fragile.  
(beat)  
Takana's group will surely retaliate.

Boss 2 can't hold himself back.

BOSS 2

And you are obviously not wise enough to understand this.

Takashima is indifferent, motionless.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BOSS 1

We value your services but cannot  
accept this behavior.

Boss 2 slams down his fist.

BOSS 2

Takashima!  
(breathing heavily)  
Do not let your personal wars spill  
over to your professional duties!

Takashima unsheathes his sword and decapitates Boss 2's head  
before anyone can blink their eyes.

Bodyguards draw their guns on Takashima. His ninja entourage  
emerges from the shadows behind him and slash through the  
guards. It's a frightful scene.

The suited bosses are struck with fear.

TAKASHIMA

Hear me now. I'll do what is  
necessary to protect your  
organization...

Takashima turns to leave.

TAKASHIMA (CONT'D)

But, never...never dishonor me.

The Night Clan ninjas exit the bloody scene like gunslingers  
who have just laid a whiskey bar to waste.

A strong gust of wind blows over Boss 2's head to reveal his  
startled face...just as it was when he questioned Takashima.

INT. KEI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

It's a hot night. The blades of a fan HUM loudly, spilling a  
moving shadow across the room. A woman's night gown lies on  
the ground.

On the bed, KEI, 23, a young, stunning Japanese woman with  
long, wet black hair and creamy skin lies peacefully. Her  
sleek body is revealed just enough.

She pulls Hiroku onto the bed and straddles him.

HIROKU

I gotta run, baby.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He eyes the black bamboo tube sitting on the table across the room.

KEI

You sure.

She squeezes him with her legs and pushes herself out from under the covers, revealing her perfect body.

Hiroku coyly smiles.

HIROKU

You really going to do this to me right now?

KEI

Gotta do it when I can.

She's hard to resist.

Hiroku swings her onto her back. Her legs wrapped around him.

HIROKU

Don't worry I'll be here when you wake up and I've got nothing to do in the morning.

He kisses her forehead and peers through the window at a foreboding pagoda style skyscraper, perched like a raven against the downtown skyline.

INT. NIGHT CLAN TEMPLE - NIGHT

The ornate chamber is lit only by candles. A magnificent wood block painting of a goddess being seduced by a sorcerer is the centerpiece of the room.

From the shadows two rows of ninjas step into the candlelight. They split, revealing their master, Takashima. A raven's head sits atop his flowing red kimono. He is dressed as a Tengu, an ancient supernatural creature believed to be ninja.

TAKASHIMA

Our adversary has been dealt with?

TWO YOUNG WOMEN dressed in black body suits run down the dark row with Japanese paper lamps. They stop, revealing Fox and Hiroku, who bow.

TAKASHIMA (CONT'D)

And have you returned what I requested?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Hiroku kneels down and rolls out the black bamboo tube on a leather mat.

From the shadows of his father, SHIRO, 30, muscular with the eyes of a hungry wolf, walks towards them.

As he takes the bamboo tube, he shoots Hiroku a look of contempt and walks back to his father.

Takashima is humbled by it's presence.

TAKASHIMA (CONT'D)

You have served the clan well. You have brought back undeniable power.

Takashima carefully takes apart the bamboo. Inside is a katana sword wrapped in a roll of thin washi paper, engraved in rows of ancient kanji. He WHISPERS to himself as he looks to the sky...

TAKASHIMA (CONT'D)

The *Kuro* is with us again father...

He looks upon it with tense, evocative eyes. The room is silent as Takashima holds the Kuro sword towards his men.

He motions Hiroku to come forward.

TAKASHIMA (CONT'D)

Please do me the pleasure of breaking the seal.

An unseen force brews as Hiroku takes the blade. It's power is evident. He carefully unravels the seal, handing the thin paper to one of the lamp girls.

The girl burns the seal with her candle. It bursts into a quick flame - ashes falling to the ground.

The blade is blistering hot in Hiroku's hand. But he is steady as he places it back in the care of Takashima. It goes cold as Takashima takes it.

Hiroku steps back.

TAKASHIMA (CONT'D)

The power of our ancestors lives with us again.

He holds it to the sky. It gleams against the light of the candles. Billowing dark clouds and a moon are engraved on the hilt.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TAKASHIMA (CONT'D)

But this is not the *only* reason we have gathered here tonight. A rogue assassin is among us...

(beat)

...and tonight he will be dealt with.

Takashima swings his sword. Candles lining the long hallway are blown out in a swift, collective motion. Darkness.

A sole lamp builds to a glow. It shines on Hiroku.

He looks around, stunned.

Takashima holds the hilt of the sword toward Shiro.

TAKASHIMA (CONT'D)

You know what must be done.

Fox, Hiroku's partner, steps away as the ninjas of the Night take Hiroku into arms. With apologetic eyes, Fox stares at him and then looks away.

HIROKU

What's going on?

(beat)

Master?

Hiroku calls out at Takashima then looks around at his brothers. Their heads are buried into their chests, denying his stares.

TAKASHIMA

Deception will not be tolerated.

HIROKU

I have been nothing but loyal to you. I've sacrificed everything for this brotherhood.

Takashima turns, his face steaming with deep, intense anger.

TAKASHIMA

Your blood is tainted with perversion and you have fooled those who trusted you most.

Takashima turns like a gust of wind and walks into the darkness.

Hiroku again looks around.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HIROKU

Has he poisoned all of you?

Shiro approaches him, his hand resting on the hilt of his sword. He grins.

HIROKU (CONT'D)

You're going to let this coward do  
this to me?

Shiro backhands Hiroku across his face. Spiked rings on Shiro's hand rips through his cheek.

SHIRO

You're nothing but an orphan and  
you know nothing about this family.

Hiroku spins out of the grasp of his brothers. He kicks the sword out of Shiro's hand, takes his legs out with a sweeping slide kick and drops a knee to Shiro's face.

But he is quickly subdued by the other brothers.

Shiro smiles, licks blood from his lips and picks up the Kuro.

HIROKU

Your mind is weak...your body slow.  
You'll never have the strength to  
lead this brotherhood.

Shiro tears him apart with an iron fist. He pulls Hiroku's face close to him.

SHIRO

Remember this face Hiroku...it will  
haunt you for all eternity.

Bloody, beaten and barely able to speak, Hiroku breathes deep and delivers his final words.

HIROKU

No. This night will haunt you.  
(he looks around)  
All of you.

Shiro raises his sword to the sky. Hiroku closes his eyes.

Blood SPLASHES against a paper wall.

EXT. ANGELES FOREST - NIGHT

Trees rise into the dark, foggy maze. Moonlight spills in and is swallowed by the forest floor.

In the dark distance...FOOTSTEPS.

TWO NINJAS wearing night vision goggles appear. They carry a long black bag.

POV NIGHT VISION - Hiroku's bloody face inside the bag. His body lies on a bed of leaves and sticks.

The woods go silent, a deafening silence. And then a HEARTBEAT. One loud THUMP.

One of them sets a bed of sticks a blaze. It lights a brilliant ring of fire around Hiroku's body. Smoke disappearing into the night air.

They watch in silence.

From the shadows, a NOISE startles them.

The cold, white eyes of deer stare back...and then runs into the woods.

One of the ninjas looks over to the other, a six-pointed ninja star is stuck into the meaty part of his neck. Blood spurts everywhere as he falls to the ground.

Before he has a chance to react, a bo-shuriken (metal-throwing spike) slices through the air and PLANTS him into the ground.

Another loud HEARTBEAT. It comes from Hiroku's body.

An older, bearded man, JOSEPH, emerges into the light of the flames. He drops to a knee and checks Hiroku's pulse.

JOSEPH

Not much time to waste...

Joseph hoists Hiroku over his shoulder, leaving behind him a flaming ring of fire and two dead Night Clan ninjas.

EXT. ALVARADO STREET - DAY

BASS THUMPS from a store selling black market DVD's, CD's, whatever they could get their hands on. The sidewalk bustles. An inconspicuous black brick Dojo with no signage sits at the end of the block.

INT. DOJO - DAY

The beautiful Kei, from earlier, trains diligently with a double-bladed sword in the empty space. Weapons line the walls and in stark black kanji - the word NIGHT in the middle of the floor.

From the far side of the dojo JIN, 30's, thin with sickly eyes, enters through a side door.

Kei continues practicing, not paying him any attention. Her swordsmanship is exquisite. She stops on a dime in front of the approaching Jin's face.

KEI  
I like to be alone when I'm  
training.

Jin breathes heavy at the sight of the Kei's sweaty physique. She drops the sword from his face.

JIN  
Shiro sent me.  
(beat)  
It's important.

KEI  
Nothing Shiro has to say to me is  
important.

Kei walks away from Jin and picks up a towel to wipe her face.

JIN  
This is.

KEI  
Well?

JIN  
One of our own has compromised the  
clan.

KEI  
Probably one of Shiro's hot-headed  
protégés.

JIN  
No.

Kei sees the sense of urgency as Jin impatiently taps his foot.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KEI  
What is it?

JIN  
Hiroku...

Jin doesn't even need to finish. Kei drops the towel and loses her composure for a slight second. Jin notices.

She picks up another blade from the wall and wipes it clean.

KEI  
This isn't another one of your lame attempts to get closer to me.

Jin reaches into his pocket and pulls out Hiroku's prayer beads, slowly dropping them into Kei's hand.

JIN  
Your father took care of him last night.

KEI  
What happened?

JIN  
No one is sure. Takashima's reasons are his own.

KEI  
I want to see for myself.

JIN  
Why?

Jin smiles.

KEI  
That's all Jin.

Kei turns, expecting him to leave. He continues to hover, making Kei uncomfortable.

JIN  
Whatever you need...I'll be here.

Kei doesn't acknowledge Jin's comment and keeps walking away. Jin bows and makes his way towards the door.

EXT. JOSEPH'S HOUSE - DAWN

The sun fades on the horizon. A cottage house sits on a remote mountain lot. The city a distant threat to it's serenity.

INT. JOSEPH'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Dusty books dangle from bookshelves entangled in vines and exotic plants. The house feels like it was built from the earth.

Needles and a wooden bowl of crushed sumi ink lie on a table. The air is thick with smoke and incense.

Hiroku lies nearly breathless on a bamboo mat in the center.

Joseph, 60's, has a whimsical charm behind his leathery, bearded face. He's seen a lot and carries this with him.

His bony hands CRUSH and GRIND sumi in a small clay mixing bowl.

He dips his needle into the ink and runs his hands over the cold flesh of Hiroku. Hundreds of names in ancient kanji have been inscribed into Hiroku's right arm.

JOSEPH

Now they will all be with you.

Joseph scribes one last name.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

And you with them.

The last name is Hiroku's own.

Joseph retreats to the corner. He opens a door and unrolls a scroll from his belt. He CHANTS.

A gust of wind blows in. The flames around Hiroku burn bright blue.

Blood trickles like a tear from Hiroku's eye.

EXT. JOSEPH'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A red cloud covers the full moon, casting a shadow across the land.

INT. TAKASHIMA'S CHAMBER - NIGHT

The crimson moonlight cascades through the ornate stained glass.

Takashima gazes upon the glass with awe. He motions to two of his men.

TAKASHIMA  
Bring Shiro to me. Now!

The men leave immediately.

EXT. 4TH STREET - NIGHT

Shiro and his crew walks past a long line of sharply dressed men and fine women spilling into a dark alley. In the distance...a minimalist sign hangs over the hidden spot...it reads LOST SOULS.

Neon lights CRACKLE and spill light onto the graffitied walls. Tricked out cars cruise past a row of upscale restaurants and bars.

INT. LOST SOULS - NIGHT

The walls, the floors, the ceilings - every corner is black and glowing with stars. A wild visual feast.

In a dark corner, Shiro sits at the head of a table with his Night Clan brothers. Fox, at the end, doesn't look to amused to be there.

Shiro raises a glass of sake to the sky.

SHIRO  
To our true brothers.

The young men toast and drink the sake. Fox and another BROTHER do not toast along with the others. Shiro looks at them.

SHIRO (CONT'D)  
What the fuck's wrong with you?

BROTHER  
We're celebrating the death of our brother, and we don't even know what he's done.

Shiro stands up and looks him deep in the eyes. His stare is demented. The brother stares back...without fear.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Shiro grabs his face, dislocates his jaw and drops him to floor. Total silence...everyone is stunned, but no one contests Shiro.

SHIRO

How dare you question my father!

He points to two waiters standing across the way.

SHIRO (CONT'D)

Take this fool away.

They shuffle over and quietly drag him towards a door in the back.

Shiro turns to look for their waitress as he pours more rounds.

SHIRO (CONT'D)

Hey girl! Bring us some more sake!

Shiro turns back to his men.

SHIRO (CONT'D)

Now drink!

At the front of the bar, Kei enters. Her sleek black dress hugs her perfect skin. Heads turn as she struts through the crowd.

Fox takes notice and heads towards her.

The bartenders immediately are at her service. She orders.

KEI

Water.

Fox approaches from behind.

FOX

Kei, what are you doing here? Your brother will kill you.

KEI

I don't think so.

Fox looks over at Shiro, swigging sake.

FOX

How are you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

KEI

Jin stopped by this afternoon.

(beat)

What's everyone saying?

Kei nods toward the Shiro's table.

FOX

Nobody knows for sure but word is Hiroku had been working for a rival yakuza gang...one of the bosses from the Iron Circle approached Takashima.

(he pauses)

And that was that.

KEI

That's bullshit.

FOX

I don't know. I'm just trying to lay low.

KEI

Lay low? You've been with him every mission for the last year.

FOX

Yup.

KEI

Did he seem like he was hiding something?

He can't look her in the eye...he doesn't know what to say.

FOX

No.

Kei looks up...holding back emotions.

KEI

So what the fuck? You didn't think to speak up? Say something? Ask some questions.

FOX

It doesn't matter. He's gone.

Kei stares right through him.

KEI

You could have done *something*.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Fox's eye grow, masking his guilt.

FOX

I know.

Kei puts the glass down on the table and bumps Fox out of her way.

Fox looks through the crowd at Shiro and his crew. A messenger whispers in Shiro's ear. He SLAMS down his sake.

EXT. OLD LITTLE TOKYO - DAWN

A raven sits on a wire as the night slips away to day.

INT. BUDDHIST SHRINE - DAY

An urn skirted with incense sticks sits solemn inside a large minimalist shrine. It holds the ashes of Boss Takana.

A good number of sharply dressed young men sit behind his family. Above the urn is a picture of the original Oyabun...his father and former boss.

A woman, 50's, steps to the podium. She has long silver hair, a beautiful weathered face and wears a stunning suit. She is BOSS WIDOW. She speaks in Japanese but with a Kansai dialect (a specialized yakuza slang).

BOSS WIDOW

This occasion does not require a monument to be raised. Just look around...it has already been built. What you see in the eyes of your brothers is the fire that Takana lit in all of us.

(beat)

This fire does not die today.

The crowd is captivated. Family members tear up. The yakuza gangsters tense up, more anger than sadness.

BOSS WIDOW (CONT'D)

He would not stop for death, so death stopped for him. And today I vow that I will continue my brother's march. He will be with us in every breath, in every step. His sacrifice will only make us stronger.

A gong rings throughout the shrine. Boss Widow steps down from the podium and bows to the urn.

EXT. OLD LITTLE TOKYO - CONTINUOUS

The voice of a CHANTING MONK echoes through the cherry blossoms outside the temple.

EXT. ANGELES FOREST - DAY

Kei stands on a small hill and looks down into the forest below.

EXT. ANGELES FOREST - CONTINUOUS

She moves toward a burnt bed of sticks. Ashes float into the sky. Next to the extinguished fire, the bodies of two dead ninjas.

Next to the bodies, a bloody shuriken lies on the ground. Wiping blood from the sharp-tipped metallic star, she reveals an unfamiliar engraving.

Two sets of footprints lead to the scene. The only other markings are animal tracks. She notices that one set of deer tracks leaves a deeper imprint than the others. She follows them.

INT. JOSEPH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tabi shoes (traditional ninja footwear) strapped with wooden platforms shaped like deer hooves sit next to the fire.

Hiroku is covered in a blanket and sprawled out on a cot. He is awake now, sweat dripping from his face like melting wax.

Against the far wall a NEWS REPORTER is projected. Scenes from a warehouse bombing play behind her.

Hiroku's eyes roll to white. Joseph SPLASHES him with a bucket of ice water. Hiroku's eyes pop open and he SCREAMS.

JOSEPH

Have to keep that heart beating.

Joseph takes a warm rag and places it over Hiroku's forehead. He raises his hand and classical music rises from some hidden speakers.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

I could do that all day.

Joseph manically LAUGHS to himself as he removes a black kettle from the fire. It steams with purple smoke.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Your heart rate is up but that's not saying much. You were at one beat a minute when I picked you up. You must have been completely catatonic. I've read about this technique. But with blood loss, it's unheard of.

Joseph rambles on as he removes bandages from Hiroku's chest wound, now sealed up sutures. He lies in a mad fever and struggles to breath.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

And that blow was delivered with some kind of precision...missed every major organ by inches.

(laughs to himself)

Anyway, we'll talk about that later.

Joseph pours alcohol onto Hiroku's wound. He winces in pain.

He places the kettle next to Hiroku's face....purple vapor billows over his face.

Hiroku grunts like he is being suffocated.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

The pain will only make you stronger.

Hiroku crescendos into a visceral howl.

Joseph slips on his Tabi shoes and looks outside the window into the rain-soaked landscape. His eyes burn wildly next to the fire.

As he speaks, his voice echoes faintly.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Don't die.

Joseph laughs and slams the door behind him.

Hiroku's face contorts, his body convulsing. The room spins into a chaotic stream of light. And then...

EXT. CLIFF - NIGHT - HIROKU'S DREAM

Two silhouetted ninjas stand their ground, one GREY and one BLACK. Behind them spans a cavernous sky of stars.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They both drop to the ground, resting their heads on their knees, praying.

A shuriken is thrown.

In slow motion, the black ninja avoids the spinning shuriken and follows with a smoke grenade to counter the attack.

Grey ninja stops cold. He is alone. The smoke clears. As he turns, Black ninja appears behind him and with a powerful grip, he rips the ninja's mask off.

Behind the mask it is Hiroku. He looks weak and defeated. The black ninja tosses him off the cliff to the infinite darkness below.

He removes *his* shroud. Again it is Hiroku, but his eyes are sunken and burn with an ominous gaze of evil.

END OF DREAM

INT. TAKASHIMA'S CHAMBER - NIGHT

A candle light reveals the bearded master. He sits in prayer on a bamboo mat.

Shiro enters.

SHIRO

Father, you have requested to see me.

Takashima slowly lifts an arm and points towards the wall.

TAKASHIMA

Take the sword Shiro.

The magnificent Kuro sword hangs solemnly.

Puzzled, Shiro takes the blade from the wall.

TAKASHIMA (CONT'D)

Hand it to me.

Shiro carefully extends the Kuro sword and bows.

TAKASHIMA (CONT'D)

This is the last time you will ever touch this noble blade.

Takashima moves closer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TAKASHIMA (CONT'D)

Because only the master of this clan can manifest its power.

SHIRO

With respect father, someday I *will* lead -

Takashima cuts him off and lashes out.

TAKASHIMA

No. You will not. You have disgraced this legendary sword. The moon bleeds because you could not lead it to it's destiny. Hiroku is not dead.

(beat)

And now I will have to do it on my own.

SHIRO

Not dead? I saw his body carried away.

TAKASHIMA

Did you see him burn? Did you see his ashes fall to the ground?

Shiro looks down, knowing there is nothing he can say.

Takashima turns his back on him.

EXT. JOSEPH'S HOUSE - DAY

Joseph takes a sip of tea as Hiroku appears in the doorway. He is shaven, his hair slicked back and he's packed up like he is going somewhere.

Three gaping slash marks scar Hiroku's cheek, left from the wrath of Shiro's iron claw.

Without out even looking, Joseph speaks up.

JOSEPH

You clean up nicely.

Hiroku manages a smile and sits down on a wooden bench.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

You know it's been years since I've had a guest this long. But you, you sleep like a bear. I might as well have been alone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HIROKU

Thank you for the hospitality.

Joseph nods. Hiroku rolls up his sleeve revealing his arm full of tattoos.

HIROKU (CONT'D)

Joseph, what's this all about?

JOSEPH

Yeah. I wanted to talk to you about that.

Hiroku sits down.

HIROKU

Well?

JOSEPH

Well...let's just say it was a necessary part of your recovery.

Hiroku doesn't pursue it any further.

HIROKU

Still one for riddles I see.

Joseph smiles and nods.

A brief silence.

HIROKU (CONT'D)

Why did they try to kill me?

Joseph peels apart a pomegranate and takes the fruit inside, purple juice spilling down his hand.

JOSEPH

Look...I could never know their true intentions.

(beat)

But, only a fool would think there is honor amongst a family who deals in death.

Joseph offers him a pomegranate. Hiroku takes a half. The juice drips down his hand sending him into a violent flashback.

FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

-- A naked Kei sits above Hiroku in ecstasy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

-- Hiroku stabs Boss Takana.  
-- Shiro slashes down Hiroku.  
-- Blood splats across black.

BACK TO PRESENT DAY

Hiroku's eyes burn black.

HIROKU

It doesn't matter. What's done is done and now I must do what is necessary.

JOSEPH

And what will that be?

HIROKU

Get answers...however I need to.

Hiroku sits down. Joseph scoffs.

JOSEPH

Maybe I should have left you to die.

HIROKU

Yeah...maybe you should of.

Joseph look serious.

JOSEPH

I didn't choose to give you life so that you could take it away from others.

Hiroku's rage grows.

The room falls silent. Joseph stands and walks to the end of the porch.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

There is a time for everything.

HIROKU

Yeah well not all of us can spend our entire lives pondering our existence.

For the first time, a tinge of anger is heard in Joseph's voice.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JOSEPH

Go ahead and bury yourself.

Joseph backs away.

Hiroku looks out towards the lights of the city on the horizon

HIROKU

You know, the first time I came to your store as a kid, your stories, your magic - it gave me hope. Hope that there was something bigger than us.

Hiroku leans back, apathetic.

HIROKU (CONT'D)

But you know what I realize now? There isn't. There's nothing but reality and those who choose not to accept it. So go on and be what you are Joseph...a coward.

Hiroku gathers his things and walks toward a long staircase cascading down the mountain. Joseph sits calmly.

HIROKU (CONT'D)

Oh yeah...one last question...how did you know where to find me?

JOSEPH

Ah...the mystery is all that keeps us going my friend.

Joseph smiles his quirky smile.

HIROKU

You're lucky I have no reason to believe you're a threat to me.

Hiroku disappears down the hill.

EXT. L.A. RIVER SHANTY TOWN - DUSK

The concrete river basin has become a third world shanty town.

It rains.

Steam rises from portable taco stands, dirty kids play in the streets. Rib-thin dogs scarp through a torn up trash can. Guns are sold openly next to fruit stands.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Old men gather under small aluminum huts playing dominoes, drinking warm beer.

The rain grows heavier.

Hiroku splashes through the muddy street in all black. A hood over his head.

He finds respite from the shower under the cover of a thatched roof.

In the alleyway behind him he hears a COMMOTION.

Two older Asian THUGS push a younger boy, SHINJI, 12. He wears beads around his neck and has the look of a kid who knows the streets well.

His skill is exceptional as he counters their attack with a spinning kick.

But his moves are no match for the thugs. They punish him with a swift kick to the chest and backhand his face.

THUG 1

You stupid little son of a bitch!  
You better come back with something  
next time.

THUG 2

Or we're gonna come for your  
family!

This outrages Shinji. He comes at them again with a flurry of attacks and punches one of the thugs. A trickle of blood drips from his nose.

The thug punishes Shinji with a monster spinning kick that sends blood gushing from his face.

He lands hard in a pile of mud. The last of the afternoon rain trickling down his face.

The thug leans in close.

THUG 1

You have the heart of a lion and  
the brain of a cockroach. We could  
use your type.

Shinji spits in his face.

The second thug LAUGHS and pulls a knife from his boot. He grabs Shinji's hand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

THUG 2

Since you have nothing for us  
today, we'll take one of these.

He puts the knife to one of Shinji's fingers.

THUG 2 (CONT'D)

And each day you show up empty-  
handed, we'll take another.

A shuriken flies in, slicing off two of his fingers. The  
knife falls to the mud.

The thug drops to his knees holding his hand. The other one  
draws a gun from his belt strap.

They look around...no one's there.

THUG 2 (CONT'D)

What the fuck was that?

Shinji quickly grabs the knife from the ground and slides it  
into his pocket.

Thug 1 fires a few shells into a nearby building, pedestrians  
run for cover.

THUG 1

Show your face you piece of shit!

A gust of wind behind the thugs RATTLES a homemade wind  
chime.

Thug 1 jumps at the noise. Another shuriken blazes in and  
slices his ear off.

Blood spurts from his ear.

THUG 1 (CONT'D)

Shit...I can't hear anything!  
Where's it coming from?

Thug 2 motions at Thug 1. His lips are moving but he's barely  
audible.

THUG 2

Let's move.

They stand and look around but Shinji is gone.

THUG 1

You'll burn for this, you and your  
whole family.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

The rain continues.

Shinji pops his head out from the shadows of a dark corner on the side of a building, looking up and down the street.

He pulls the knife from his pocket and smiles. His breath is heavy and his face is bruised.

HIROKU (O.S.)  
Your courage is exceptional.

Hiroku appears behind him. Shinji clicks open the blade of the knife.

SHINJI  
Stay away from me.

HIROKU  
Calm down, kid.

SHINJI  
Just get out of here, man. You're gonna get my ass killed.

HIROKU  
What was that all about?

SHINJI  
They won't stop harassing me till I join up. Threaten my family, they think it will break me down...well fuck them.

HIROKU  
Yakuza?

SHINJI  
Yeah dumb shit...yakuza.

Shinji sees a shuriken in the muddy street. He grabs it.

SHINJI (CONT'D)  
Where'd you get this?

Hiroku snatches it from Shinji and wipes it down.

HIROKU  
Don't worry about it. (beat) What else do you know about those yakuza?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

SHINJI

Oh I see - a badge...My grandpa says all you badges think you're superheroes. But they never last down here in the concrete.

HIROKU

Kid - I'm no cop.

Hiroku turns. His blood red eye and the scar on his cheek glow in the dim light of a flickering street lamp.

Hiroku tosses the shuriken back to Shinji.

HIROKU (CONT'D)

Keep it.

Shinji looks it over.

HIROKU (CONT'D)

You know how to get down to the Hollenbeck?

SHINJI

Hollenbeck?

HIROKU

I'm in need of some weapons.

SHINJI

Good idea. You're gonna need more than this down here.

Shinji holds up the shuriken.

SHINJI (CONT'D)

Follow me. And don't pull any shit.  
(he turns to Hiroku)  
They say you get deep enough into Hollenbeck, you'll see the devil himself.

The young Shinji and Hiroku disappear into the chaos of the broken street.

EXT. HOLLENBECK TUNNEL - NIGHT

Shadows dance against the graffiti covered tunnel.

Shinji guides Hiroku past the dark figures huddled in corners.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They step out of the tunnel and into the mouth of the concrete river basin. An orange light illuminates a row of steel beams bracing a crumbling bridge above.

In the distance a small hut sits on the bank of the river, it's built from thatches of wood and junk.

SHINJI

That's my grandfather's place. They call him Murray. Crazy Murray...He's a gun aficionado (he mispronounces aficionado).

HIROKU

Aficionado.

Hiroku corrects him.

SHINJI

That's what I said. Anyway I'd introduce you but that's not his style. You have to introduce yourself.

Shinji waves and walks away.

SHINJI (CONT'D)

I'll see you around.

Hiroku looks down at the make-shift house.

EXT. MURRAY'S HUT - NIGHT

A sign hanging outside reads: "BEWARE LAND MINES." Hiroku looks around and screams inside the hut.

HIROKU

Murray?

Nothing. Again.

HIROKU (CONT'D)

Murray!?

GUNSHOTS light up the night sky from the window of the hut.

Hiroku crouches to the ground as the door busts open. A gangly man with a shaved head emerges, MURRAY, 50's. His complexion is dark. He wears a long fur coat and shades.

He sees Hiroku on the ground and laughs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MURRAY

Just a .22 boss. Like a mosquito bite.

He peers into the darkness towards Hiroku.

MURRAY (CONT'D)

How can I help you?

Murray pulls down his sunglasses. Hiroku walks into the light.

HIROKU

I'm in need of your services.

INT. MURRAY'S HUT - CONTINUOUS

Weapons everywhere. Handguns, semi-automatics, swords...it's a junkyard of artillery.

MURRAY

So what brings you down to the swamp?

HIROKU

Weapons. I need weapons.

MURRAY

Well then Merry fuckin' Christmas compadre. Welcome to the toy store.

Hiroku knows exactly what he needs. He reads it off like a laundry list.

HIROKU

Sniper rifle, 2 .45's with silencers, nitrate, plastics -

Murray pulls down his glasses in disbelief. Hiroku's anxiousness makes him uneasy.

MURRAY

Whoa! Whoa! That's quite the order. Whatcha' got planned?

HIROKU

You always question your customers?

Murray shoots him a look.

MURRAY

Only when I should.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Murray stands up and inventories the rack of weapons on his wall.

HIROKU

Look I need to take some  
(pauses)  
uncommon measures. The people I am  
after...they are not easily hunted.

Murray notices the tattoos inscribed on Hiroku's arm.

MURRAY

Look, you learn the smells down  
here. The sulfur in the water, the  
fish in the garbage. And the shit,  
the shit you don't want coming up  
on your doorstep.

He pulls a handgun with a silencer from the wall, cocks the hammer and fires one off across the room. It blasts it out the window. It RICOCHETS in the distance.

MURRAY (CONT'D)

This is all I got for you.

A bullet shell spins to a stop on the ground. Murray pops a clip into the gun and hands it over to Hiroku.

HIROKU

Not exactly what I had in mind.

MURRAY

I know what your all about...

Murray takes a moment and paces around Hiroku.

MURRAY (CONT'D)

Let me ask you a question...does  
your enemy have any enemies? Those  
are your friends. You don't need  
weapons...you need an army.

Hiroku tosses the gun into his bag. Broken headlines cover the walls behind Murray. Words flash - BOMBINGS, SARIN, SUBWAY. Something about the headlines sticks.

Murray turns on an old cassette radio player. Moroccan music BLASTS from the scratchy speakers. Hiroku tries to thank him over the speakers.

Murray has tuned out.

EXT. DOWNTOWN L.A. FASHION DISTRICT - NIGHT

The beautiful old Victorian theatres of Los Angeles have been transformed into brothels. Half-naked women line the walls, street performers line the sidewalks and street preachers howl messages of the apocalypse.

A crowd gathers in a small grassy park around a performer on a soapbox. He turns to the crowd. It's Joseph.

In his hand is a jar with a single firefly.

JOSEPH

A true magician does not play upon the audience's fears...he plays with something much greater...their imagination.

The sporadic light of one firefly lights the inside of Joseph's jar. He has their attention.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

You see the firefly is nature's magician. He uses illusion to deceive his prey. By mimicking the pattern of the female, he preys upon his victim's own lustful desires.

Joseph is a master storyteller. Kids watch in awe as the firefly lights the dark night.

In the back of the crowd stands Kei.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Who would like to see the light of the firefly?

The crowd cheers.

The firefly jumps around. Joseph unscrews the lid and put his hand over top of the jar, it goes completely black.

A moment of silence.

He pulls his hand away releasing hundreds of fireflies into the night sky.

Joseph smiles and walks into the crowd to riotous cheers.

Beautiful swarms of fireflies light the sky.

Kei hops to her feet and follows him.

EXT. DOWNTOWN L.A. FASHION DISTRICT - CONTINUOUS

Joseph rounds a corner of the bustling street. A few hole in the wall vendors sell rice bowls from behind steamed windows.

Kei follows at a calculated distance.

A wok FLAMES UP stirring Kei and taking her attention away for a slight moment.

She looks back. Joseph is no where to be seen.

Kei spins in a circle looking up and down the sidewalk and then a voice from behind.

JOSEPH

Did you enjoy the show?

Joseph smiles. Kei is stunned.

KEI

You were quite impressive.

JOSEPH

Tea?

EXT. TEA DEN - NIGHT

Joseph and Kei sit in a hole in the wall cafe. A small swinging bulb provides the only light.

KEI

I believe this is yours.

Kei sets down the shuriken she found in the woods and pushes it towards Joseph.

KEI (CONT'D)

It took a lot of time to trace this etching.

An ancient etching outlines the six points of the throwing star.

JOSEPH

I've been looking for that.

Kei continues.

KEI

A few vague references tracing back to the early days of Sakai. But nothing concrete.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KEI (CONT'D)

So I start looking for old book  
dealers in town...somebody that  
might have something the libraries  
could never get their hands on -

Joseph interrupts.

JOSEPH

And the night you broke into my  
store...did you find what you were  
looking for?

Joseph laughs.

KEI

I saw all I needed.

Kei quits the small talk.

KEI (CONT'D)

Where is he?

JOSEPH

I'm not sure how to answer that  
question?

KEI

It's not hard.

JOSEPH

Well I'm not sure he knows where he  
is.

Joseph takes a sip of tea.

KEI

Look I am a friend and I need to  
find him...before they do.

JOSEPH

Just a friend, huh?

KEI

Should I continue following you  
until I get my answers?

Joseph takes a sip of tea.

JOSEPH

Think you can keep up?

They sit in silence. Kei looks into the street, rain dripping  
from the canopy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

He needs you, Kei...but you won't find him...

Joseph puts his jacket on and stands up.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

...he'll find you.

He walks into the cold, wet night.

EXT. DOWNTOWN ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

A car rides by in the distance splashing a puddle against a wall. Three yakuza gangsters, TIMO, RUN and MINT spill out of a hidden door. They are drunk with adrenaline and moving fast.

They quickly scale a fire ladder to the top of a building.

EXT. BUILDING ROOF - NIGHT

The three Yakuza thugs sit behind a giant air conditioning duct. As they drink beer, they check their loot - a scarf full of uncut diamonds.

RUN

Straight out of the ground. Uncut, African glass.

TIMO

Put that shit away.

MINT

And we'll be selling this shit right back to those Hasidics. Nothing they can do about it.

Timo eyes his surroundings, always aware.

Run takes a sip of beer and puts the diamonds in his coat pocket.

TIMO

Okay it's been 30 minutes. We go out one at a time. Leave two minutes apart, get your bike and get back to the compound. If you feel like anyone is following you, drop out. Drive to the casino, to your girl's...drive to the fucking beach...I don't give a shit.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TIMO (CONT'D)

Just lay low and make sure you come home clean.

Mint hops up and throws on his backpack.

MINT

All right. I'm gone. I'll see you suzuki motherfuckers on the other side.

Mint laughs, gives Timo and Run a pound and disappears down the side of the building.

TIMO

You go next. I'll wait it out.

RUN

Nah! Go for it. I gotta take a leak.

Timo motions his hand out.

RUN (CONT'D)

What?

TIMO

Hand it over.

RUN

The diamonds?

(beat)

What you don't trust me?

TIMO

I don't trust your judgement.

Run shakes his head and reaches into his pocket.

RUN

Man you gotta lighten up Timo. I ain't never fucked up before.

Run shows his hands. He's not missing any digits.

TIMO

Yeah that only means you're due.

Run hands him the scarf full of diamonds.

TIMO (CONT'D)

Remember what I said...watch your back and come home clean.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Timo straps his pack on and disappears down the side of the building.

Run is flushed with embarrassment.

After Timo has left he cusses under his breath.

RUN

Fucking Timo. Acts like he owns me.

Run walks to the far side of the building and turns to take a piss.

RUN (CONT'D)

Do gooder mother fucker.

Out of the darkness below, a black rope and grappling hook swing up towards Run. The rope wraps around his feet and rips him off the side of the building, slamming him into the brick. His pants halfway down his legs.

On the side of the building is Hiroku, in full ninja garb, iron claws on his hands digging into the brick.

HIROKU

Were you done?

Hiroku grabs keys from a carabiner on Run's belt loop.

Run reaches out and tries to grab him but Hiroku loosens the rope and drops him another two or three stories hanging upside down.

Hiroku scales the side of the building like a cat. He grabs Run's bag from the roof and disappears into the darkness.

Run hangs from the side of the building, YELLING.

EXT. SECOND STREET TUNNEL - NIGHT

A black crotch rocket motorcycle swerves in and out of traffic and into the white vacuum of the Second Street tunnel.

INT. YAKUZA COMPOUND - NIGHT

The black motorcycle swings into an abandoned warehouse. It looks like a chop shop. Cars dissected in every corner.

The gate shuts.

Two motorcycles sit in formation under a small aluminum awning. The riders still with their helmets on.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The last motorcycle whips a 180 and stops in the middle of the warehouse floor.

Mint pulls off his helmet and rips out a micro uzi. Four other Yakuza gangsters emerge from the shadows. Timo pulls off his helmet and steps off his bike.

He stares Hiroku down.

TIMO

Who the fuck are you?

Hiroku removes his helmet.

HIROKU

I'm here to help.

Timo laughs and swiftly pulls a gun from behind his back pointing it at Hiroku, who is also quick to the draw with his own silencer.

TIMO

I'd like to know who you are before  
I kill you.

HIROKU

That'd be a mistake.

The guns get closer. Timo turns his back.

TIMO

Shoot this motherfucker.

HIROKU

I know who killed Boss Takana.

Timo turns back around, like a conductor he brings everyone's guns down.

TIMO

What'd you say?

HIROKU

I know who killed your boss.

TIMO

Who?

HIROKU

I did.

The thugs swarm with this. About ten more guns fly up and one anxious thug moves in quickly on Hiroku.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

They go hand to hand. Hiroku freezes him with a quick pinch to the pressure point in his neck. He pushes him back into the crowd.

Timo motions for everyone to stand down. A thug grabs Hiroku's gun and spits the clip onto the ground.

TIMO

No one killed Boss Takana.

HIROKU

You're right. He was a coward. He killed himself.

TIMO

You are one dumb motherfucker.

The tension is thick. Hands on triggers. A voice speaks up from the crowd.

VOICE

Wait! Wait! We're not going to let him go easy. This piece of shit needs to die slow.

INT. INDUSTRIAL BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

A tattooed fist rocks the jaw of a burly, bearded street fighter. The Hand grabs the beaten fighter's head, lines up his cocked tattooed fist and unleashes his signature gunshot punch to the fighter's head.

The crowd goes wild as he falls hard to the ground. Eyes roll to the back of his head.

Mint sits next a MAN in the stands. They exchange money.

MINT

I got 10 to 1 on this next one.

MAN

10 to 1? The Hand's good but 10 to 1?

MINT

This guy killed The Hand's brother.

MAN

Bet!

Hiroku is brought out to the edge of the ring shirtless and barefoot. One of the yakuza guards pats Hiroku down before he enters the ring.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Hip-hop BLASTS through the dank room. The Hand leans against a wall in the corner of the arena. Sweaty, scantily clad women give him water and tend to his bruises.

The raging bull looks through the crowd for his final prey.

The music dies down. An onlooker shoots his gun into the ceiling. The crowd goes WILD. It's fight time.

The Hand and Hiroku slowly circle each other.

Instantly, a barrage of punches fly towards Hiroku. He dodges with ease and follows with a foot sweep that brings the giant to the ground.

Hiroku moves on him quick but is caught in the jaw by an uppercut from the downed giant.

The crowd hears Hiroku's teeth POP.

Hiroku tries to use his pressure point technique on The Hand, but he is too powerful.

He begins to manhandle Hiroku, who takes punch after punch. He manages to keep his feet but the crowd becomes a dizzying blur around him.

Finally The Hand grabs Hiroku by the head and cocks his tattooed gun hand.

The crowd goes into a frenzy. They know what's about to come.

THE HAND

This is for my brother.

The dazed Hiroku looks down at his limp, arm inscribed with thousands of names in ancient kanji.

Power suddenly surges through him. His hand clenches to a fist and he looks up like a man possessed.

The Hand fires his gun-punch.

A faster, stronger Hiroku evades the oncoming punch, turns and grips the Hand's monstrous arm. His fist goes high in the air and hammers down on the Hand's arm, snapping the bone right out of the skin.

The Hand reels back in pain. Hiroku jumps, lands a foot on the Hand's chest and launches himself into the air.

He comes down spinning and his foot demolishes The Hand's face. Teeth spray over the floor and his body falls hard.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The Hand lies on the ground, completely knocked out.

The crowd goes silent...and then chaos ensues. Fights break out, guns are drawn on Hiroku.

In a dark corner, Boss Widow smiles and walks towards the exit. Timo hurries to the ring and throws a bag over Hiroku's head, the guards cuff him.

The angry mob storms the ring. Timo and the guards hold them back with drawn guns.

TIMO

Get him outta here.

INT. BOSS WIDOW'S CHAMBER - NIGHT

A fish tank. Beautiful , exotic saltwater fish swim lazily through the bright blue water. PLOP! A bloody finger drops in.

BOSS WIDOW (O.S)

We only cut off one.

Boss Widows sits behind her desk.

BOSS WIDOW (CONT'D)

This is a business, not a brotherhood. No second chances.

A scared yakuza thug sits on his knees in the elaborate room. Paintings of Japanese kamikaze bombers line the back wall.

The thugs clenched jaw holding back his anger. Blood drips from a towel over his hand.

BOSS WIDOW (CONT'D)

Leave.

She turns her chair away from him. Her long silver hair flowing down her shoulders.

Hiroku brushes by the thug on his way in. He's wearing a nice suit. A few bruises and cuts on his face. His hair slicked back.

BOSS WIDOW (CONT'D)

Do you know why you're still alive?

HIROKU

Because you are curious.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOSS WIDOW

A lot of people lost money on you.

Boss Widow lights a cigarette on the end of long black holder.

Hiroku takes a seat.

BOSS WIDOW (CONT'D)

But not me?

Hiroku wastes no time.

HIROKU

I killed a high level yakuza boss from your organization a few weeks ago and stole something of value from him. I'd like to know why he had it in his possession...and I'd like to help return it.

Boss Widow takes a long drag from her cigarette. Smoke curdles up around her stone cold face and disappears.

BOSS WIDOW

And this is why you are here?

HIROKU

One of many reasons.

BOSS WIDOW

And if I did believe you, would you not assume that I would feel the need to do something about this?

HIROKU

Certainly.

Boss Widow stands up. Her legs, long and sleek. She circles Hiroku.

BOSS WIDOW

In my youth, I could have any man I wanted. But I always chose them with much care.

Boss Widow paces.

BOSS WIDOW (CONT'D)

Each one serving a purpose.

Boss Widow screws her cigarette into a glass ashtray and leans on her desk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BOSS WIDOW (CONT'D)

Men - they are weak in the embrace  
of a woman. They lose themselves.  
Do you have a lover?

HIROKU

I have nothing.

BOSS WIDOW

I don't trust people who say they  
have nothing.

HIROKU

Well then I hope my actions speak  
for themselves.

Boss Widow gently laughs.

BOSS WIDOW

What is it that you wish to offer  
me?

HIROKU

I offer my services. I am worth a  
hundred of your men. I have  
mastered techniques they couldn't  
learn in many lifetimes. And in  
return I seek soldiers.

BOSS WIDOW

And for what purpose?

HIROKU

It's complicated but if you trust  
me...let's just say your brother  
will not have died in vain.

Boss Widow dwells on this for a bit.

BOSS WIDOW

You know there is a certain duality  
in our nature. The same mind that  
chooses to help can also choose to  
hurt. Most of us have a hard time  
accepting this.

She walks closer to Hiroku.

BOSS WIDOW (CONT'D)

If you are truly committed to this  
cause. If you truly have nothing to  
live for.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BOSS WIDOW (CONT'D)

Bring me someone who was close to  
you...and bring them to me dead.

HIROKU

Done.

Boss Widow smiles.

EXT. NEW OTANI HOTEL GARDEN - TWILIGHT

From atop rooftop garden, Kei eyes the bustling city below.

A giant RED SUN sets behind the top of a building, stark  
against the smoggy sky. A digital ticker scrolls below  
emblazoned with the TSE (Tokyo Stock Exchange) logo.

The prosperity of downtown sits in the shadows of the slums  
that crawl up the hills in the distance.

Kei rolls Hiroku's prayer beads in her hand and walks away  
towards the stairs.

EXT. NEW OTANI STREET LEVEL - CONTINUOUS

A black Mercedes sedan rolls up beside Kei. Takashima rolls  
down the window. He manages a smile.

INT. TAKASHIMA'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Kei looks out the window...car lights stream past.

TAKASHIMA

How are things?

Kei doesn't answer.

TAKASHIMA (CONT'D)

I understand. Times have been hard  
on all of us.

KEI

I heard you found a traitor among  
the brotherhood.

TAKASHIMA

Yes.

Takashima stares out the window...his face tense, showing  
disapproval of her comment.

TAKASHIMA (CONT'D)

But this does not concern you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Kei breathes deep, knowing she cannot discuss her secret relationship.

KEI  
Yes, father.

TAKASHIMA  
Kei, you have always been strong.

Takashima's eyes glow in the reflection of the window.

Kei looks forward...avoiding eye contact.

TAKASHIMA (CONT'D)  
You're brother on the other hand,  
he is not to be trusted. He is  
weak. And the clan will need  
strength when I'm gone.

KEI  
I understand.

TAKASHIMA  
I need someone to follow in my  
footsteps. Someone that will not  
fail me like Shiro.

Takashima finally turns and looks at Kei.

TAKASHIMA (CONT'D)  
I need a heir.

KEI  
An heir?

TAKASHIMA  
Yes, Kei.

KEI  
What are you saying?

He holds Kei's hand tight.

TAKASHIMA  
We must sacrifice ourselves for our  
family. It is the only way we will  
stay strong.

Kei looks out the window, she restrains herself from saying anything else. The lights of the city blur by.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The car finally comes to a stop in front of Kei's apartment building. She opens the door, still not looking at her father. He grabs her arm.

TAKASHIMA (CONT'D)

Kei.

KEI

Yes father.

TAKASHIMA

With time you will understand.

Kei nods and walks away.

EXT. KEI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Hiroku walks down the empty street in the early hours of the morning. Ambulance and police sirens BLARE in the distance.

He disappears up a fire escape.

INT. KEI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Kei sleeps. A gust of wind blows through the apartment.

From a pocket of darkness, a shadow appears in the doorway. The shadows moves closer to the bed. A slight sliver of light reveals Hiroku's face, now a breath away from Kei.

She lies motionless...and then swiftly swings her head from the pillow ROCKING Hiroku's face with a head butt.

She jumps from the bed, wearing a black night gown, and delivers three punishing kicks sending Hiroku CRASHING into the wall.

Hiroku wipes blood from his lip. Kei readies herself for another attack and then realizes the intruder is Hiroku.

HIROKU

The head butt, I didn't expect that.

Hiroku stands up. Kei comes at Hiroku.

KEI

Where have you been? You could have let me know something.

She slaps him and is on the verge of tears.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HIROKU

Did they feed you those lines? Keep me here long enough so they could bust in. I'm sure they knew I'd come to you first.

KEI

What are you talking about?

Hiroku grabs her jaw with force, choking her.

HIROKU

You were the most deceitful of all of them.

He pushes her away.

HIROKU (CONT'D)

But I wouldn't expect anything less from Takashima's blood.

Kei slumps against the wall.

KEI

Listen to me...stop. Why would I do this to you?

Hiroku is far beyond reasonable. He pulls a long knife from his belt.

HIROKU

That's a great fucking question? One I've asked myself.

Kei backs against the wall. She reaches into a dresser and pulls out long knife of her own, hiding it behind her back.

HIROKU (CONT'D)

But then it all made sense...family comes first. You and I were just a part of his plan.

Hiroku comes at her with his blade. He cuts one of the straps of her nightgown off. The gown falling from Kei's shoulder. Tears streaming from her eyes.

KEI

Don't do this.

HIROKU

But why me? Did he need a fall guy for the hit on Takana or did he just want you for himself?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Kei begins to cry. Hiroku moves closer. He pushes the blade into Kei's cheek.

KEI

Joseph said you were a monster.

Hiroku swings the knife towards her. Kei blocks his blow with her double-edged blade.

KEI (CONT'D)

I see he was right.

Hiroku SCREAMS at her.

HIROKU

Come at me!

Hiroku's shadow looms large across the wall.

KEI

I will not.

HIROKU

Then I'll finish this myself.

Hiroku flies into the air spinning. Kei's movement is exquisite. She deflects all of his attacks.

Hiroku gazes into Kei's eyes with an unnatural fury. He is beyond himself. She tries to look past the madness of his eyes.

KEI

Hiroku...

He swiftly spins, his long knife moving through the air in a quick violent motion. He knocks the blade out of Kei's hands and stops his blade inches from her chest.

Her nightgown falls from her shoulders. She is completely vulnerable.

Their bodies now pressed against each other. He can't finish what he came to do.

For a moment, the rage disappears.

He pulls the blade away from her and steps away, the moonlight against her naked chest.

He looks at Kei one last time and jumps out the window into the cold, dark night.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

She comes to the window watching Hiroku's shadow disappear between the buildings.

EXT. L.A. RIVER SHANTY TOWN - NIGHT

Hiroku sleeps in a giant concrete pipe. Water DRIPS all around him.

Steam releases from a nearby duct, waking Hiroku. He walks to the edge of the pipe - the shanty town stretches below.

EXT. MURRAY'S HUT - CONTINUOUS

Hiroku packs a black bag in a shed behind Murray's hut. The streets are empty, only a few night crawlers hang on to the disappearing darkness.

SHINJI

Hey, Hiroku.

Hiroku turns, surprised. Shinji leans against a shed.

HIROKU

What are you doing?

SHINJI

I'm on my way to work. Loading fish down at the docks. Grandpa got me in down there. I'm going to get my own boat someday.

HIROKU

Well go on then.

Shinji walks closer.

SHINJI

You okay? I haven't seen you in a few days.

HIROKU

I'm just coming to get my stuff.

SHINJI

How come?

HIROKU

I'm going away Shinji.

SHINJI

Going away? Where?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HIROKU

Look. I'm not who you think I am,  
and I don't need some kid following  
me around.

SHINJI

Yeah, well don't think this is a  
big surprise to me.

Shinji takes Hiroku's palm and slams a shuriken into his  
hand.

SHINJI (CONT'D)

And I know who you work for.  
Grandpa says they are even worse  
than the Yakuza.

Hiroku looks at the shuriken, emblazoned with the emblem of  
the Night Clan.

Shinji walks down the street, not looking back.

EXT. CHINATOWN PARKING LOT - DAY

A black Cadillac idles.

Fox hops into the car and backs out of his spot. When he  
turns, Hiroku now stands in front, wearing a hood and  
sunglasses.

Fox doesn't recognize his former Night Clan brother.

Hiroku walks up to the door. It's locked. He punches the  
window out and opens the door.

INT. CADILLAC - CONTINUOUS

Fox whips out a manriki chain and wraps it around Hiroku's  
neck pulling him into the car. Hiroku kicks his feet on the  
dash of the car pulling the chain loose.

He quickly whips the chain around Fox's hands locking them to  
the steering wheel.

HIROKU

I see you've lost your edge.

FOX

Hiroku?

HIROKU

Drive.

INT. CADILLAC - CONTINUOUS

Fox barrels through traffic.

Hiroku pulls out a silencer and slams it into Fox's temple.

HIROKU

Should I look away like you did?

Fox eyes the lane next to him and swerves the car onto the shoulder of the 110 freeway, trying to throw Hiroku out of the shattered window.

Hiroku grazes Fox's head with a shot as the car comes to a violent halt.

Fox contorts his hands free from the steering wheel and tries to escape the car.

Before he can get out, Hiroku kicks the shit out of him, sending him out of the car.

FOX

I don't want to fight you. I can make this right.

HIROKU

No. No you can't.

They gaze at each other...there's nothing else to say.

The traffic blurs behind them. Everything goes silent. All that is left is their struggle.

They draw their hands to their palms, drawing strength from their pose. The names on Hiroku's tattooed arm exposed.

They match stances. Sweat drips in slow motion from Fox's head. His hands unsteady. Hiroku's energy is too powerful for Fox's mind.

HIROKU (CONT'D)

Goodbye friend.

The SOUND of the traffic picks up again. Fox turns...he is not standing where he was before. A car speeds towards him.

Blood SPLASHES against the side rail of the highway. Cars quickly begin to clot.

INT. BOSS WIDOW'S CHAMBER - DAY

Hiroku walks in. He is still bloodied, his eyes demented.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Boss Widow is in a meeting with other Yakuza bosses.

BOSS WIDOW

Excuse me.

Hiroku walks over and turns on a plasma TV next to the wall.

He flips to the news.

On the news is a birds eye view of a congested highway. Over the footage we hear a reporter's voice from a helicopter.

REPORTER

The 110 has come to a stand still.  
A man apparently walked into  
traffic, causing a string of  
accidents along a 200 foot stretch  
of the freeway. Police have called  
it an apparent suicide.

Hiroku lowers the volume. Boss Widow and her associates look on in silence.

HIROKU

Together we did many missions. He  
was the closest thing I had to a  
real brother.

Boss Widow stands up and addresses her associates.

BOSS WIDOW

Leave us.

Hiroku eyes them down as they shuffle out.

BOSS WIDOW (CONT'D)

You have proven your commitment.  
Now what is your plan?

HIROKU

Give me six of your best men.

Hiroku walks closer.

HIROKU (CONT'D)

I will return what was once yours  
and get justice for your brother.

Boss Widow walks closer to Hiroku. They are close, like they could rip each other's clothes off.

BOSS WIDOW

Done.

## REVENGE MONTAGE

-- High level members of the Iron Circle are shot to death in their offices.

-- Hiroku shoots a former Night Clan brother down in a park through the crosshairs of a sniper rifle.

-- He marks an X on the face of a picture of a former brother.

-- A construction site blows up. Members of the death squad sit in a dark van in the distance.

-- Dressed as a prisoner, Hiroku kills a dirty cop that wears the tattoos of the Iron Circle Yakuza.

-- Hiroku marks out three more faces from his photo and looks over the city from a rooftop.

## END OF MONTAGE

## INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Hiroku's death squad load shells into clip after clip. They exchange light banter and re-enactments of their recent conquests.

Hiroku sits alone, digging a serrated knife into a wood table.

Boss Widow and Timo enter the makeshift headquarters through a heavy door.

TIMO

You requested to see us?

Hiroku gives a slight wave.

HIROKU

It is time.

Boss Widow looks at her men and then at Hiroku.

BOSS WIDOW

So you're ready to finish this?

HIROKU

We are ready.

BOSS WIDOW

Very well. I look forward to hearing of your success.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She holds Hiroku's arm.

Hiroku snaps his serrated knife back into it's case. He nods at Boss Widow.

Her and Timo leave.

The Death Squad members bust up.

DEATH SQUAD 3  
I ain't never been with no old  
lady...but I would...

Hiroku quickly silences him with a shuriken that nearly slices his ear off and sticks in the wall behind him.

HIROKU  
Quiet. Some of you are going to die  
tonight...so I would take this very  
seriously.

INT. DEATH SQUAD WAREHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Hiroku unrolls a schematic of the Night Clan compound on a table. Everyone listens diligently.

HIROKU  
The Night Temple is completely  
impenetrable from an outside force.  
It would be a regretful effort on  
any one's part.

DEATH SQUAD 1  
So, what the fuck are we going to  
do?

Hiroku holds up a finger for them to wait a moment.

He returns with a man, bound with duct tape over his face.

HIROKU  
(to the death squad)  
Ask him.

One of the squad members puts a glock 9 to the kneeling man's head.

DEATH SQUAD 1  
(smiling)  
Tell me, who the fuck are you?

The man whimpers. Hiroku pushes his gun down.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HIROKU

He's our ticket. The personal messenger and driver for the Iron Circle.

DEATH SQUAD 2

And you're going to trust this guy? You know he'll sabotage us soon as we get to the gate.

Hiroku grabs the man's face.

HIROKU

Not if he loves his wife and kids.

The Death Squad laughs. Tommy tries to SCREAM through the duct tape on his mouth.

DEATH SQUAD 2

So he's going to get us in?

HIROKU

No, I told you the place is impenetrable. You're going to cause a diversion so *I* can get in.

Hiroku walks through the schematic on the table.

HIROKU (CONT'D)

Tommy does his delivery every night at seven o'clock and they always check him thoroughly. So when that guard starts to check the truck you better do what you do best...

Hiroku pops a clip in his gun.

HIROKU (CONT'D)

...cause some chaos.

EXT. NIGHT CLAN TEMPLE GATE - NIGHT

The pagoda style Night Clan temple rises toward the dark sky in the shadows of the L.A. skyline.

Two large wooden doors sit at the front of the building, the only entrance. A black suburban rolls slowly towards the door.

The driver side window of the black Suburban rolls down. An ARMED GUARD, donning all black, nods and waves Tommy through.

The wooden gates slowly CREAK open.

INT. BLACK SUBURBAN - NIGHT

Crouched in the back of the car...the death squad members look at each other nervously. One of them whispers.

DEATH SQUAD 1  
What the fuck's going on Tommy?

Tommy's face is white. He manages a smile as he passes by the stoic guard.

DEATH SQUAD 2  
Why didn't they search the car?

Tommy keeps looking forward. He talks under his breath.

TOMMY  
I don't know. That's never happened before.

EXT. ADJACENT SKYSCRAPER - CONTINUOUS

Hiroku, dressed in his old Night uniform, squats atop a crane arm. He watches the Suburban enter the compound.

INT. BLACK SUBURBAN - CONTINUOUS

The entrance to the temple is beautifully manicured and silent. Eerily silent.

The Death Squad members peer out of the tinted windows.

DEATH SQUAD 2  
What now?

Death squad 1 points at the glass windows of the lobby.

DEATH SQUAD 1  
You heard Hiroku...let's cause some chaos.

EXT. ADJACENT SKYSCRAPER - CONTINUOUS

Hiroku watches the Suburban take off at high speed and CRASH straight into the lobby.

INT. NIGHT CLAN TEMPLE LOBBY - NIGHT

Tommy immediately takes a bullet to the head through the windshield. Blood splatters everywhere.

The six member squad roll out the doors and lay down suppression fire. Two unload 9mm hand guns in each hand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Another two join with M-5 machine guns, and the last two brandish M-16's.

The smoke clears but the lobby is empty.

EXT. ADJACENT SKYSCRAPER - CONTINUOUS

Twenty stories above, Hiroku runs at top speed along the crane's arm toward the Night Temple. He leaps into the void separating the two buildings.

At the apex of his jump, Hiroku FIRES a grappling spike into the wall and swings onto the rooftop. He rolls to a stop.

INT. NIGHT CLAN TEMPLE LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

The Death Squad reload their weapons.

Holes riddle the walls, broken light fixtures flicker on and off.

DEATH SQUAD 3  
Where the fuck is everybody?

DEATH SQUAD 2  
Impenetrable my ass...

He hears a metallic CLANK on the marble floor. And then another. And another. The crew turns to find smoke spewing from all directions.

They look up...a rain of Ninjas drop from the ceiling - their blades descend upon them.

DEATH SQUAD 3  
Shit.

BLACK.

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

The doors open with a BING. A Night Clan guard inspects a Night shinobi uniform on the floor. Unfortunately, he also discovers a grenade in the clothes.

BOOM!

INT. NIGHT CLAN TEMPLE - CONTINUOUS

The explosion in the elevator brings an entourage of Night Clan guards into the hallway.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Furious as a beast, Hiroku appears in the distance and barrels down the hallway. He cuts down all that stand in his way.

Hiroku leaves a bloody path behind him. He triangle jumps into the elevator shaft and climbs his way up the frayed cable.

INT. TAKASHIMA'S CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

Hiroku enters and finds Takashima in prayer in front of giant stain glass window. The Kuro lies on a bamboo mat in front of him.

HIROKU

Since when does the devil pray?

TAKASHIMA

Welcome home.

Hiroku charges forward.

Takashima nimbly dodges each swing of Hiroku's blade. He waits for the perfect moment to step in close and blows dust from his fist into Hiroku's face.

Out of control, Hiroku reels back. His eyes burn, he gasps for air and wildly swings his blade. He hallucinates....the stain glass comes alive, raven's swarm around Takashima.

TAKASHIMA (CONT'D)

I've been expecting you.

BLOODY MONTAGE - SIMULTANEOUS SCENES

-- The Death Squad lie dead in the lobby...their bodies riddled with swords.

-- Timo spews up blood in a sushi restaurant. A plate of poisoned half-eaten raw fish sits in front of him.

-- Boss Widow is strangled by a black rope in her office.

BACK TO SCENE

The room spins as Hiroku stumbles around, wiping his bleary eyes.

Takashima LAUGHS and draws the sword of The Kuro.

TAKASHIMA (CONT'D)

You have brought death to everyone around you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Takashima appears frighteningly disfigured

Hiroku blindly strikes toward Takashima's voice. Takashima swats away Hiroku's blade and chokes Hiroku with one hand.

TAKASHIMA (CONT'D)

Now I'll finish what Shiro could not.

The grip of Takashima's hand crushes Hiroku's neck. His eyes glow blood red.

Hiroku raises his tattooed arm and delivers an unexpected blow to his chest.

The room spins, lights trailing around Hiroku. He rolls out of the way as Takashima SMASHES the Kuro towards him. He rolls again but this time the Kuro CLANGS against a double-edged ninja-to.

A masked ninja stands at it's hilt.

Takashima turns - the aged eyes of Joseph stare back.

Joseph's superior swordsmanship backs Takashima away from his prey.

He grabs Hiroku, drops a smoke bomb and disappears up a wire towards the ceiling.

Through Hiroku's eyes, Takashima morphs to a demonic raven.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

A fire CRACKLES. Joseph sits peacefully holding a tea kettle over the flames.

Crickets CHIRP as a soft wind blows over Hiroku...still lucid from Takashima's poison.

JOSEPH

I think it is time for you to know who you truly are my friend.

The flames of the fire flare up...

TRANSITION TO:

FLASHBACK

EXT. WIND CLAN VILLAGE - DAY

INSERT TITLE

RURAL JAPAN

A small fire burns next to a village tavern. The streets are bright, peaceful, and bustling.

JOSEPH (V.O.)

I knew your grandfather. Unlike your mentors, he had a conscience. In those times, war had become a way of life. And after years of working for rival samurai families, your grandfather's clan, the brothers of the Wind, resigned to a simple life, free from the political corruption of the shogun and the gangs that ran the streets of the big cities.

INT. OLD NIGHT CLAN COMPOUND - NIGHT

Ninjas train in unison in the dark, ornately decorated Night Clan temple.

JOSEPH (V.O.)

But the other prominent Shinobi clan of the night wanted power. They cut a deal with the shogun and Yakuza gangs to serve them as assassins and spies.

INT. WIND CLAN TEMPLE - NIGHT

An ELDER NINJA dressed in grey, customary colors of the Wind, stands defiant to an entourage of sharply dressed Yakuza bosses.

JOSEPH (V.O.)

The Wind Clan refused the shogun and the pressure of the gangs. So under their agreement, the first order of business for the Night was to eliminate the rogue Wind Clan.

EXT. WIND CLAN TEMPLE - DAY

In the veil of dawn, ninjas in black sweep in from the mountains around the Wind Clan temple from every direction.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOSEPH (V.O.)  
They descended upon the remote  
hideout of the Wind...

INT. WIND CLAN TEMPLE - DAY

The elder leader of the Wind stands before 20 of his men. Smears of blood paint the walls, Night ninjas surround them from every side.

A cloaked Night warrior draws his sword on the Wind Clan elder.

JOSEPH (V.O.)  
...and in front of twenty of his  
best disciples, killed their  
leader. But the twenty men,  
including your grandfather, did  
nothing. They swore their  
allegiance to the Night Clan,  
working as spies and assassins for  
two years.

INT. OLD NIGHT CLAN COMPOUND - DAY

Ninjas dressed in black disappear and reappear in the shadows of the compound.

JOSEPH (V.O.)  
But on the anniversary of the night  
their master had been killed, their  
true intentions were revealed. They  
sieged the Night Clan temple when  
they least expected it.

INT. HALL OF THE NIGHT MASTER - NIGHT

The ninjas rip their black ninja-yori (robes) off revealing grey beneath.

JOSEPH (V.O.)  
One by one they ended the lives of  
their closest enemies.  
(beat)  
And then they killed the leader of  
the Night Clan.

From behind a door the master of the Night is cut down by the Wind Clan ninjas.

JOSEPH (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
His son watched from the shadows in  
horror, unable to do anything.  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOSEPH (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 And he vowed he would strike down  
 every Wind Clan member in revenge  
 for his father's death.

EXT. WIND CLAN VILLAGE - NIGHT

A once prosperous mountain village burns. Women scream.  
 Children cry.

JOSEPH (V.O.)  
 Takashima burned their villages,  
 killed their women and forced their  
 children to work for the Night. It  
 was his ultimate revenge.

The night swallows the landscape like a massive beast.

END OF FLASHBACK

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Joseph's reflects in the light of the flame.

JOSEPH  
 The wars of the yakuza gangs mean  
 nothing to him compared to the war  
 that rages in his heart. It's not  
 vice that Takashima commands, it's  
 destiny. His destiny versus yours.  
 He needed you to unlock the spell  
 of the Kuro Sword. But he didn't  
 expect you to survive.

Hiroku tries to take it all in.

HIROKU  
 Why train me as one of his own?  
 Raise me all these years?

JOSEPH  
 It was the only way he could be  
 sure.

HIROKU  
 Of what?

JOSEPH  
 That you would never touch Kaze.

HIROKU  
 Kaze?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOSEPH

One of two swords forged in the volcano at Mt. Unzen. The Kaze and the Kuro - the only two swords made by the hands of the legendary Shadow Priests.

HIROKU

What power does Kaze hold?

JOSEPH

Mystery shrouds Takashima's immortality. But if in the hands of a proper master, Kaze is said to be the only thing that can strike him down.

Hiroku stands.

HIROKU

So I am the master of Kaze?

JOSEPH

Kaze is a sword that has no master.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

But you are the only one left who can lead it to its final destiny. The last child born with the blood of the Wind.

A wind HOWLS in the cold, quiet desert night.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

You climbed a hill and overcame your vengeance, but a mountain awaits.

HIROKU

Where will I find Kaze?

JOSEPH

You must travel to Sakai. An old friend can help there you. I haven't been to Japan in many years...but if he is still alive you will find him at Rikyu Tea House.

EXT. SAKAI PORT - DAY

A wooden water taxi zips through the traffic in the port. A WATER TAXI DRIVER, no older than 14, helms the motor at the back of the boat.

At the front, Hiroku stands holding a black duffle bag. The sheath of a sword is wrapped tight to his side.

The taxi moves closer to the port, past a cargo ship and reveals the marvelous city of Sakai.

The city rises from the ocean like a towering crag of rock. A glow fills the air. Massive buildings are lost in the fog. The hills are scattered with shanty buildings, windy avenues and street lamps.

Fishermen, merchants, dock workers, businessmen, old, young, coming, going. The port is alive.

The young taxi driver dodges an outgoing fishing boat.

The captain of the boat goes ballistic on the kid who smiles and flicks him off.

Hiroku points toward a dock.

HIROKU

Over there. That will be fine.

The taxi driver swerves the boat in the direction of the dock. He abruptly cuts the engine off. The boat stops on a dime.

An older man on the dock cusses at the kid.

Hiroku steps out of the taxi.

HIROKU (CONT'D)

Where can I find the Rikyu Tea House?

WATER TAXI DRIVER

What do you have for me?

He hands the young kid a few neatly folded bills.

HIROKU

This is all that I can offer.

The kid looks at the money and then back at Hiroku.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WATER TAXI DRIVER  
Hmmm...How 'bout that sword?

HIROKU  
If you can take it from me...it is  
yours. If not, then you must lead  
me on my way.

The kid jumps to his feet, always ready for a challenge.

WATER TAXI DRIVER  
You got it.

The kid jumps on the dock and makes a swift move to grab the  
sword from Hiroku's bag.

Hiroku jumps from the dock and into the boat.

He mans the engine and pulls away.

WATER TAXI DRIVER (CONT'D)  
Hey! He's stealing my boat.

The old man laughs.

The kid runs up the dock and along the boardwalk after  
Hiroku.

Hiroku surveys the scene and pulls the boat back up to a  
nearby slip.

The kid wildly runs down the dock. He lunges at Hiroku who  
dodges and sends him splashing into the water.

Hiroku looks down.

HIROKU  
Someday you will use that courage  
for something good.

Hiroku extends his hand into the water to help the kid out.

He's soaked and humiliated.

WATER TAXI DRIVER  
I didn't need your help.

HIROKU  
But I still need yours.

The kid wrings out his shirt and points towards the city.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

WATER TAXI DRIVER

There.

An ornate tea house rises into the Sakai skyline.

Hiroku looks on, hands the kid the money and smiles.

INT. RIKYU TEA HOUSE - DAY

The minimalist tea house is a maze of small dens. Paper walls line the hallways where Confucian scholars, physicians, poetry masters and purveyors of extravagance huddle in small rooms.

Carrying lamps and dressed as a worker, Hiroku approaches a woman with shy eyes. She holds a tray of tea cups. Hiroku speaks in Japanese.

HIROKU

(subtitled)

Excuse me. I am here to deliver  
these to Master Kato. Do you know  
where I can find him?

The woman says nothing, looks at Hiroku bashfully and walks away.

Hiroku sighs.

The woman looks back and nods for Hiroku to follow.

She leads him through the maze of rooms and stops in front of a half-open sliding paper door.

Inside sits KATO, a peaceful looking man in his 80's.

The tea room is bare, with only a kettle and a small fire sitting in the middle.

Hiroku bows to the girl.

HIROKU (CONT'D)

(subtitled)

Thank you.

The woman politely smiles and is on her way.

Kato speaks without opening his eyes.

KATO

You come with a new lamp?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HIROKU  
Yes. Where shall I place it?

KATO  
Where you always place it.

Kato opens his eyes and locks them onto Hiroku.

HIROKU  
I am not here to deliver lamps.

KATO  
Then why are you here?

HIROKU  
I have been sent by a friend from  
your past...

Hiroku walks closer.

HIROKU (CONT'D)  
Joseph.

Kato's face tells a thousand stories at the mention of  
Joseph's name.

KATO  
Please sit and close the door.

Hiroku obliges.

INT. KATO'S TEA ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Kato wastes no movement as he prepares tea.

HIROKU  
Joseph said you were a man of  
extreme wealth.

KATO  
Indeed I am.

HIROKU  
And this is your tea house?

KATO  
No. I am one of many men who share  
this house. This room is all I  
have.

HIROKU  
This room?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KATO

You see the most formidable luxury  
is having no luxuries at all.

Kato hands Hiroku a cup of tea.

HIROKU

How did you know Joseph?

KATO

He was a great friend from a  
different lifetime.

Hiroku nods.

KATO (CONT'D)

Joseph came to the far east as a  
missionary. He left a warrior.

HIROKU

Of the Wind Clan?

Kato quickly looks around to see if he is being overheard. He  
lowers his voice.

KATO

Yes. He was a great warrior but  
living in the shadows can be a  
difficult life.

Kato puts out the small flame.

KATO (CONT'D)

He was one of the only to escape  
the wrath of Takashima. Women,  
children, the elderly. No one was  
spared. He slashed down as many as  
he could on his way out...but the  
guilt has never left him.

Hiroku's face reads into the words of Kato.

HIROKU

And why did he leave Sakai?

KATO

I don't know. He said nothing,  
except his services were needed  
elsewhere.

Hiroku looks at him. He is intrigued, but speechless.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

KATO (CONT'D)

And why has Joseph sent you to me?

HIROKU

I am in search of a sword.

(beat)

A sword that Joseph said only you  
can lead me to.

Kato nods.

KATO

Things are very different now, and  
Joseph has been gone a long time.  
What you want in this town you must  
take.

HIROKU

Joseph said you are the only way.

KATO

Then perhaps your journey ends  
here.

Kato puts down his tea and removes the kettle.

Hiroku stands up.

HIROKU

He said I should show you this.

Hiroku rolls up his shirt sleeve, revealing the tattooed  
names of the Wind Clan.

Kato's bone-thin fingers cautiously touch Hiroku's arm. He  
whispers a few of the names with a touch of fear.

HIROKU (CONT'D)

I was struck down by the blade of  
the Night.

Hiroku rolls down his sleeve and stares at Kato. A long  
silence follows.

HIROKU (CONT'D)

I'm the last of my people.

INT. RIKYU TEAHOUSE LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

Bookshelves line the walls and men sit on pillows reading  
from antique books.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KATO  
I'll help you as much as I can.

Kato takes a weathered, beaten book from a cabinet.

KATO (CONT'D)  
This will lead you on your way.

Hiroku takes the book with curiosity.

HIROKU  
A book of haiku?

KATO  
These words have many faces. I have  
done all I can.

Hiroku stares at the book.

HIROKU  
I don't understand.

Kato's calm demeanor changes. A few of the readers in the library take notice of Hiroku and whisper amongst themselves. Kato walks Hiroku to the exit.

KATO  
The purest form of struggle is that  
of the mind. Your mind is the only  
way to truth. Now please go!

Kato pushes a dismayed Hiroku out of the tea house.

KATO (CONT'D)  
Trust no one. The Night is always  
watching you.

Kato closes the door, leaving Hiroku alone, outside the teahouse. He tucks the book under his arm and walks towards a bustling marketplace.

EXT. BAMBOO GARDEN - DAY

A flock of ravens burst into the air from a stalks of bamboo around the Night Clan compound.

INSERT TITLE

LOS ANGELES

A slight wind RUSTLES the reeds of bamboo behind Takashima A ravens CAWS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

From the sleeve of his robe, Takashima tosses a six-pointed shuriken towards the shadows behind him. It SPLITS a stalk of bamboo, revealing the face of Joseph.

TAKASHIMA

I have little patience for your distraction, Joseph.

JOSEPH

Yes, you seem to have many of your own to deal with.

The same raven caws at Joseph again. Takashima feeds the bird.

TAKASHIMA

Why are you here?

JOSEPH

I have a simple message.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Look to Sakai.

Takashima turns, Joseph is no where to be seen.

EXT. RURAL JAPAN COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

A long line of wind blown cherry trees line a half-paved country road. The sky bleeds magentas and oranges behind puffy, dark storm clouds in the distance.

At the end of the road, Hiroku sits among long blades of grass, meditating. The WAIL of the wind betrays the silence of the country hill.

Hiroku breaks from his meditation and pulls the leather bound book from his satchel. He reads the ancient kanji on the weathered pages.

HIROKU (V.O.)

From all directions, winds bring petals of cherry into the grebe lake."

Now carrying the book in his hand, Hiroku walks into the distance.

A petal floats past and drifts through a field and into a small lake.

EXT. RURAL JAPAN HILLSIDE - CONTINUOUS

Hiroku rides in the back of a beaten up cargo truck. Rain BEATS on the thin canopy, bags of oranges and figs scattered about.

Hiroku looks to his book again.

INSERT - HAIKU IN KANJI

(SUBTITLE)

"In all the rains of May, there is  
one thing not hidden - the bridge  
at Seta Bay."

BACK TO SCENE

The peak of the lesser Fuji rises through the rain clouds.

A peaceful river crosses into the village below the modest Seta bridge.

EXT. NIGHT CLAN TEMPLE BAMBOO GARDEN- DAY

An outdoor garden sits behind the ominous Night Temple.

Two wolves walk past rows of onlooking ninjas. The wolves are not alone. An unkept madman, THE WOLF NINJA, makes the pack complete.

The wolves take a seat at the feet of the Wolf Ninja.

TAKASHIMA

It's been a long time.

Razor sharp, metal claws rest on the Wolf Ninja's fingertips. He digs them into the ground.

WOLF NINJA

What do you want Takashima?

TAKASHIMA

I need a man hunted.

Takashima takes a moment.

TAKASHIMA (CONT'D)

He is the last son of the rogue  
Wind Clan.

Takashima unsheathes the Kuro.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TAKASHIMA (CONT'D)  
His blood has been shed on this  
sword.

The Wolf Ninja takes in the scents of the sword.

From behind a ninja mask, Kei's eyes watch the Wolf Ninja carefully. She blends in with the entourage surrounding Takashima.

WOLF NINJA  
And where will I find him?

TAKASHIMA  
He has headed back to Japan,  
towards the Hills of Fire and Wind.

WOLF NINJA  
What's in it for me?

TAKASHIMA  
What is it that you require?

The two wolves next to him lick their blood stained lips and stare at Takashima.

TAKASHIMA (CONT'D)  
Tell your dogs to stand down or  
I'll cut them down and this meeting  
will be over.

The Wolf Ninja waves his hand and the wolves settle down.

TAKASHIMA (CONT'D)  
If you return with his head, I will  
release you from banishment.

WOLF NINJA  
We do not wish to return...

He stands. The wolves following his lead.

WOLF NINJA (CONT'D)  
...but I will accept your  
challenge.

The wolf pack leaves.

Kei breaks with the line of ninjas and follows.

EXT. MT. UNZEN (JAPAN) - DAY

A soft winter breeze rustles the baby firs that hang dangerously off the side of a crag of rock. A snow capped mountain sits in the background like a resting Buddha.

The wind SWEEPS towards a rickety suspension bridge over a stream below. Hiroku emerges from around the corner. His face is weathered, bearded and rugged from the high winds.

His eyes like stones in an ocean of white.

EXT. CAVERN ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

The stream cascades in to a dark cavern, carving a path in the mountainside. Hiroku cautiously enters the cave.

He lights a chemical flare and slowly advances alongside the flowing stream within the mountain.

As he journeys deeper into the heart of cave, the water grabs onto a faint light from ahead.

The stream picks up its pace as it drains to a hidden point.

The water flows faster and faster, drawing Hiroku to the edge of another waterfall that ends in a pool just below.

Standing at the apex of the waterfall, Hiroku gazes at his true home.

A green valley emerges below, the remains of an ancient volcano. A few huts still remain mostly covered in vines and a dilapidated old pagoda sits at the heart of the extinct volcano bed.

EXT. LOST WIND CLAN VILLAGE - DAY

Hiroku carefully walks down broken steps to the basin.

He notices a row of fresh crops in the shadow of the a distant hill.

As he continues, there is no sign of life - nothing but empty huts and wooden training platforms. Hiroku journeys deeper into the village until he gazes upon the rising pagoda covered in vines.

A gust of wind blows a tile from the broken pagoda. Hiroku turns.

FOUR ELDERLY MEN, in simple wool robes and straw hats, stare back at him. One holds a spear towards him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HIROKU  
I'm sorry, I didn't mean to  
trespass.

Hiroku bows to the men. The spear is lowered.

HIROKU (CONT'D)  
I am Hiroku. I have followed the  
words of this book to this place.

Hiroku holds the book up.

ELDER 1  
We are the Four Elders. This is our  
home.

The men walk past Hiroku, lay their farming tools down, and enter the pagoda. Elder 1 turns to Hiroku.

ELDER 1 (CONT'D)  
Come.

INT. WIND CLAN PAGODA - CONTINUOUS

The elders sit in a circle facing a statue of a tall warrior holding Kaze, the touched sword of the Wind.

No one speaks. Elder 1 motions for Hiroku to sit in front of the statue.

He eyes the gleaming blade in the statue's hands.

HIROKU  
(to himself)  
Kaze?

ELDER 1  
The four of us haven't left our  
home in over a hundred years.

HIROKU  
Hundred years?

ELDER 2  
You must become one with nature and  
she will protect you.

ELDER 3  
This is the way of the Wind.

Hiroku rolls up his sleeve to show them his arm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HIROKU

These names on my arm...do you recognize them?

They look at each other and fix their eyes on Hiroku.

ELDER 1

These were our brothers and now you carry their burden.

HIROKU

Their thirst for vengeance is topped only by my own. I have been overcome by rage. It left me empty. Now I seek to learn the way of the Wind.

ELDER 1

If it is blood that the Wind seeks, then Kaze calls to you. Look there.  
(beat)  
Fumma, the wind devil, holds the blade. You must take it.

Hiroku reaches out and lays his hands upon the blade.

The elders bow their heads and pray.

A cloud blots out the sunlight falling from the volcano entrance.

The statue transforms into a living being. It is FUMMA, the protector of Kaze. He is massive, nine feet tall, his long hair flows like silk.

The Elders fade away like vapor.

FUMMA

Welcome.

Hiroku jumps back and prepares to draw his sword.

FUMMA (CONT'D)

If you draw your sword, then I will be forced to answer with mine.

Fumma rises, sheathes Kaze and pulls another blade to his side, which is twice the length of the Wind Sword.

FUMMA (CONT'D)

It would be a shame to have to cut down one of my brothers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HIROKU

Brother?

FUMMA

Yes brother, let us talk and draw  
swords later. I haven't spoken with  
my people in a long time.

He walks with Hiroku towards the exit of the pagoda.

FUMMA (CONT'D)

There is much to show you.

EXT. WIND CLAN VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

The village within the volcano has changed.

It is no longer decrepit and overgrown. People are cooking,  
building, painting, living. Kids chase each other in the  
streets.

Hiroku can't believe his eyes.

In the distant hills, young men train in unison.

INT. WIND CLAN DOJO - DAY

Fumma bows before a council of old Wind Clan ninja. Hiroku  
follows.

One of the Elders rises from his seat on the floor and  
approaches Fumma.

ELDER 1

It has been a long time.

FUMMA

Indeed.

The Elder steps back from Fumma to examine Hiroku...he  
recites a haiku.

ELDER 1

Against the brushwood gate - Dead  
tea leaves swirl - In the stormy  
wind.

Hiroku counters.

HIROKU

The sound of hail - I am the same  
as before - Like that aging oak.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The council stirs at the young warrior's wisdom.

ELDER 1

Tell us brother. Where does the  
Wind Clan's strength lie?

HIROKU

The brothers of the Wind are the  
best fu no kata warriors in the  
world. They carry the wind in their  
lungs and hearts.

ELDER 2

But you have been trained in the  
ways of the Night?

HIROKU

Yes and for this I am sorry. I did  
not know who I was...and so I've  
come to learn.

The council sits in silence for a moment.

ELDER 3

Once, the Night and Wind Clan were  
like brothers against a common  
evil.

ELDER 4

But Night lost its way and  
destroyed our people.

HIROKU

I hope bring honor back to our clan  
and restore the ways of the ninja.

ELDER 1

And how do you plan to accomplish  
this?

HIROKU

An old friend, charged me to seek  
out Kaze. He said I was the only  
one who could lead it to it's final  
destiny.

Fumma rises to his feet.

One of the elders SLAMS a block against the ground as to  
signify a motion has been set.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FUMMA

It is my duty to protect Kaze. No one may take the blade unless they are skilled enough to take it from me.

Hiroku looks to the council.

HIROKU

I have come home in peace.

ELDER 1

We all have duties, Hiroku. Fumma has his, and you have yours.

Hiroku touches the names on his arm.

HIROKU

With respect, I cannot fight my own people.

FUMMA

Kaze alone will not defeat Takashima.

ELDER 1

True, you must have strength and have the soul of the Wind to hold Kaze.

(beat)

You must learn our ways by mastering the five elements as we use them. Only then will you be worthy to wield Kaze.

Elder 1 thrusts his fist forward with an outstretched thumb.

MONTAGE - HIROKU TRAINS

ELDER 1 (CONT'D)

One! Your body must be as strong as the earth.

-- Walking towards a distant hut, Hiroku struggles with bags of grain on his back. He falls to his knees. A woman walks past him holding two bags of grain without struggle.

Hiroku's face grows scruffy as he continues back and forth, but now carrying wooden buckets of water. He grows stronger with each step.

Finally he steadily carries bags of rocks towards a half-built shrine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

A young kid with a smaller bag of rocks falters in front of him. Hiroku picks up the rocks and stands the boy up.

--Elder 1 thrusts his fist forward and his index finger now joins his outstretched thumb.

ELDER 1 (CONT'D)

Two! The earth may be strong, but  
the steady flow of water is strong  
enough to cut through stone.

--Hiroku trains in the strong rapids of the river. An Elder perched on a rock above him. As he tries to move forward, the force of the water knocks him off balance and swallows him.

He continues to practice. Snow begins falling on the side of the river. His bearded face is speckled with water crystals.

His movement up stream steadies as he SLASHES through the swells of the rapids. The water moves in harmony with him, creating a beautiful dance.

--Elder 1 raises another finger.

ELDER 1 (CONT'D)

Three! The earth is strong, the  
water cuts, but the fire burns away  
our illusions.

Hiroku goes hand to hand with one of the Elders next to a fire. The Elder easily counters his moves but never looks directly at Hiroku. He follows Hiroku's shadow, always staying a step ahead of his young opponent.

ELDER 2 (V.O.)

You must fight the shadow, not the  
man. The shadow does not lie.

Two shadows battle each other. Both move quick and precisely, eventually mirroring one another.

--Elder 1 raises the next finger.

ELDER 1

Our home was made of earth, fire,  
and water. But you must fill your  
lungs with the high winds to call  
yourself one of the Wind Clan.

--Hiroku makes an agonizing climb up the volcano's inner wall. He slips, stumbles, and nearly falls off the cliff side.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

However, his body quickly gains enough strength for him to leap from one rock to the next until he reaches the summit. Hiroku takes in the view. His lungs fill with the clean and pure air of the high winds.

He gets to the top and finds himself overlooking the cliff he saw in his earlier dream. He stands in silhouette, a cavern of stars drift behind him.

Hiroku meditates. From the tranquility of his mind he drifts from his own body.

INT. COUNTRY TAVERN - CONTINUOUS

Kei sleeps in a small, dark room. A gust of wind sweeps through the open window.

She is jolted awake and looks around the room, still half-asleep.

KEI

Hiroku?

There is nothing. She slowly rises from creaky bed and walks to the window, pulling the blinds back.

The early morning sun peaks over the horizon casting the first light on the beautiful Japanese countryside.

INT. WIND CLAN DOJO - DAY

--Elder 1 raises the last finger.

ELDER 1

Now that you've become one with the elements, you must combine them and master the secrets of alchemy.

EXT. WIND CLAN VILLAGE - DAY

Poised to do combat, Fumma and Hiroku stand a few feet from each other.

FUMMA

It has been many years since I have drawn my blade. Don't disappoint me.

Fumma draws his no-dachi (a long sword used by horseback calvary men). Hiroku draws his black painted, fortified ninjato.

A ray of sunlight pierces through the overhead clouds.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Hiroku strikes.

A mighty CLANG of steel erupts as Hiroku's blade hits a Fumma's immovable no-dachi.

With a twist of his body, Fumma's blade creates an wave of steel that repels Hiroku.

Fumma launches himself into the air and lands a close blow next to Hiroku that spews forth dust and air.

Overpowered, Hiroku retreats into the surrounding bushes.

FUMMA (CONT'D)

I see your training has served you well...

A shuriken emerges from a nearby bush. Fumma easily dodges the ninja star.

FUMMA (CONT'D)

...but the art of stealth is not about becoming invisible...

Fumma focuses his dark eyes and attacks the bush behind him. No-dachi and ninja-to connect with another CLANG.

FUMMA (CONT'D)

It's about making everything around you invisible.

Hiroku moves forward. Fumma's defense is as fluid as the nearby stream.

They lock swords...the giant pushing Hiroku back. Hiroku counters with his own strength. He holds his ground...forcing Fumma to release him.

HIROKU

Your strength will not defeat me.

Fumma smiles and moves into a crouching stance. He throws Hiroku off balance with a mighty hit, sending him tumbling into the river.

The unrelenting Fumma presses the attack with an aerial assault.

Hiroku moves fluidly through the river, their blades SLASHING through the water. Hiroku sprays Fumma's eyes with a lash of his sword, sending him backwards.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Fumma regains his posture and sees Hiroku high-tailing it towards the village buildings.

He pursues at top speed.

EXT. WIND CLAN VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

The village road is empty. Onlookers observe the battle through the cracks and crevices of the buildings.

A crouched Hiroku clings to the top of one the rooftops.

Fumma stands poised for a hidden attack.

At the last moment, he looks upward just as Hiroku descends from the center of the sunlit sky.

Despite Fumma's speed, he isn't fast enough to wield the heavy no-dachi. He unsheathes the mighty Kaze.

Hiroku releases a blast of smoke to conceal his position as he attacks Fumma in a tight melee.

FUMMA

Petty trickery will not defeat me.

Hiroku is thrust from the cloud of smoke as Fumma rushes Hiroku like a bull.

FUMMA (CONT'D)

(yelling)

Focus and fight like the wind!

Blades CLASH.

Fumma swings Kaze from low to high, catching Hiroku's chest. Blood trickles down his tattooed arm.

FUMMA (CONT'D)

Wind can be soft and soothing. But it can also be a small storm on the ocean that collects strength. With focus, the storm becomes a magnificent hurricane.

Hiroku and Fumma fly towards one another and exchange a flurry of blows. Hiroku no longer eyeing Fumma. He matches every move of the giant's foreboding shadow. Despite Fumma's strength, Hiroku stays glued to him.

FUMMA (CONT'D)

Come on...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Hiroku breathes deep, closes his eyes and makes his move for Fumma's Kaze.

Fumma tries to catch Hiroku with a fatal swing of the no-dachi, Hiroku ducks.

As the blade slashes overhead, Hiroku's shadow thrusts Kaze through the shadow of Fumma.

Hiroku opens his eyes. Fumma stands untouched by the sword. He looks to Hiroku and bows.

FUMMA (CONT'D)

(smiling)

Hiroku...The Hurricane.  
Hold your head high. You have  
proven yourself worthy of holding  
Kaze and carrying our message to  
the world. Take Kaze and restore  
the way of the ninja.

The Elders move forward and bow in acknowledgement.

The tattoos on Hiroku's arm trickle like water from his arm and into the blade of Kaze.

The glint of the swords reflects in the sun and then...

INT. WIND CLAN PAGODA - DAY

Hiroku's hands rest on the Kaze. The statue of Fumma now before him. The Pagoda behind the statue again worn-down and decrepit.

The four elders are still sitting in their original positions.

The statue crumbles to pieces and Hiroku is left holding Kaze.

HIROKU

Thank you brothers for your  
strength.

ELDER 1

Go. We await your return.

Hiroku bows and exits.

EXT. MT. UNZEN - DAY

Hiroku exits the volcano's mouth, snow falling on the barren cherry trees.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

With Kaze strapped tight to his back, Hiroku makes the long journey away from the mountain.

INT. NIGHT CLAN TEMPLE - NIGHT

Takashima sits meditating inside a candle-lit room. His eyes, a storm of evil. He looks to the dark corner of the room.

TAKASHIMA

Jin, burn...everything. Burn everyone and anyone that has helped him.

The shadow in the corner shifts, tiny bits of light reveal him.

JIN

As you wish.

Jin departs.

TAKASHIMA

Come to me Hiroku.

EXT. SNOWY RURAL HILLSIDE - NIGHT

The snow beats hard against Hiroku. He covers his face and looks for refuge from the storm. Hiroku spots an old, abandoned hut.

INT. HUT - NIGHT

A piece of slate sparks in the darkness of the hut. Hiroku lights a small pile of sticks. He warms his hands around the fire.

Two wolves HOWL in the distant woods.

Hiroku takes little notice.

The wolves HOWL again, this time noticeably closer.

Hiroku listens.

EXT. SNOWY WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Hiroku steps through the white landscape of snow and trees. He lowers himself to the ground, the snow collecting around him. He blends into the fallen snow.

A wolf GROWLS just a few feet away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Hiroku eyes the red-eyed beast. Blood drips from its fangs into the white snow. He sniffs, closer and closer. Hiroku's fingers grip the blade at his side.

The wolf tenses up.

Hiroku's eye catch something moving in on him from his side.

He is blind-sided by a second wolf that lands on top of him.

Hiroku rolls with the beast avoiding its snapping jaws and raging claws.

After a serious bout with the wolf, Hiroku rises to a fighting stance. The wolves circle him.

From the distance, a voice.

WOLF NINJA

Hiroku, I presume.

Hiroku watches as the Wolf Ninja drops from the trees above to join the rest of his pack.

HIROKU

I don't know you. So let's just go our separate ways.

WOLF NINJA

I don't think you have a choice.

The wolf ninja releases the slack in a nearby rope. Kei falls from the a tree, her feet tied to the rope and mouth gagged, She dangles inches above the blood-thirsty wolves.

WOLF NINJA (CONT'D)

I have a bounty to collect.

HIROKU

Who sent you?

WOLF NINJA

I never reveal my employer.

The Wolf Ninja attacks.

He fends him off with exceptional skill.

His iron nails CLASH with the mighty force of Hiroku's Kaze blade.

The wolves surround Hiroku from the other side. Hiroku leaps into the tree, looking down at Kei.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

She stares back, his calmness eases her as he cuts the rope. She lands on her feet. The wolves turn towards her.

They go to attack. Before they can move a rain of shurikens pour down from the trees.

The wolves YELP, bleeding all over the snow. Hiroku jumps from the tree, now face to face with the Wolf Ninja.

HIROKU

I told you we should have gone our separate ways.

WOLF NINJA

I'm going eat your beating heart for that.

The Wolf Ninja crouches on the ground and watches Hiroku, keeping his distance for a second. He then attacks.

Before he can get to Hiroku, a dart flies through the sheets of snow, planting into the Wolf Ninja's neck.

He HOWLS. Another dart and another land with perfect accuracy but don't stop him.

His iron claws slash towards Hiroku's face, who ducks. He pulls his blade sideways, severing his clawed hands.

The Wolf Ninja stumbles backward HOWLING. He falls near the injured wolves, the white around them turning red.

Hiroku sheathes Kaze and looks to Kei through the falling snow.

TRANSITION TO:

INT. HUT - NIGHT

Hiroku lies on a cot in the barren hut. A few sparse candles sparsely light the room. Kei lets her hair down, hanging her wet clothes.

KEI

A lot has changed...the Yakuza wars spill into the city everyday. Takashima never leaves the compound. There is word of revolt inside the clan.

HIROKU

So you decided to leave?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KEI

No I left to find you.

HIROKU

I am sorry I doubted you. I was not myself.

Kei rubs the arm that once held the tattooed names of the Wind. She looks into Hiroku's eyes.

KEI

I am done with my father's war. I want to stay here with you. Create a new life for us.

HIROKU

I have to go back. I have to end this.

She holds her finger to his mouth.

KEI

Then let us be here for now.

Hiroku moves his face closer to hers.

They fall into each other's arms...making up for lost time.

TRANSITION TO:

EXT. LOS ANGELES HIGHWAY - DAY

A black Lincoln makes its way through the early morning traffic.

INT. BLACK LINCOLN - CONTINUOUS

Kei and Hiroku sit in the back. The car muscles up an overpass ramp. The smoggy city lies before them. Pagoda skyscrapers nestle against modern glass structures in the distant skyline. Through the morning haze, Hiroku eyes the Night Clan temple.

He looks at Kei and smiles.

HIROKU

There's a few people I need to see before we visit Takashima.

Kei smiles and puts her head on Hiroku's shoulder.

EXT. L.A. RIVER SHANTY TOWN - DAY

Hiroku and Kei walk through the dark tunnel on the way to Hollenbeck. As they approach, the sunlight is blotted out by ash and smoke.

They walk out of the tunnel into the mouth of the river. Houses are burnt and broken. Murray's hut is gutted and smoking.

EXT. MURRAY'S HUT - CONTINUOUS

The shack where Hiroku had stayed is in disarray. He walks past the doors that have been ripped off their hinges.

Murray's boots hang out from under a blood-stained blanket that covers his body.

Hiroku kneels down in prayer.

Suddenly a SCREAM rips from behind Hiroku, and Shinji is upon him.

He slashes at Hiroku with his pocket knife. Hiroku keeps him at bay.

Shinji's face is smeared with soot. His eyes are red from scarring.

The boy rages under the restraint of Hiroku.

HIROKU  
Shinji...(louder) Shinji. It's  
Hiroku. Settle down.

This only incites more anger inside Shinji.

SHINJI  
You're the reason they did this to  
us! You're the reason they killed  
my grandfather!

Hiroku steps back, taken by the boy's words. The boy swings at Hiroku. But he cannot see, he has been blinded.

He falls into a corner crying.

Hiroku looks around.

Kei kneels in front of Shinji.

KEI  
Calm down. Calm down.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He pushes Kei away.

SHINJI  
Who are you?

KEI  
I'm a friend.

She wipes his tears.

KEI (CONT'D)  
Who did this?

SHINJI  
They came after us. They killed  
grandpa, they tortured him, but he  
wouldn't talk.

Shinji continues to cry.

HIROKU  
I'm sorry I brought death to this  
house.

Hiroku's jaw tenses up.

Hiroku kneels next to Shinji and holds his hand.

HIROKU (CONT'D)  
Why did they do this to you?

SHINJI  
(sobbing)  
They wanted me to tell everyone,  
that they'd be watching.

Hiroku ties a black scarf around Shinji's eyes like a  
blindfold.

HIROKU  
You are safe now Shinji.

Kei lifts Shinji up. They look out on what is left of the  
burnt out Hollenbeck district.

HIROKU (CONT'D)  
We will make sure of that.

Hiroku looks at Kei.

HIROKU (CONT'D)  
Let's find Joseph.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Before they leave, Hiroku catches a glimpse at newspaper clipping on Murray's desk.

INSERT TITLE:

*Mayor resigns under allegations of ties to criminal organizations.*

EXT. JOSEPH'S HOUSE - DAY

A long staircase winds towards the mountain house.

Hiroku, Kei, and Shinji make their to the front door. Its open, the screen hangs off the hinges.

Hiroku stops them.

HIROKU

Stay here. Let me check it out.

INT. JOSEPH'S HOUSE - DAY

The house is a wreck. Books thrown about, furniture broken. No sign of Joseph.

HIROKU

Joseph! Joseph!

Hiroku continues through the house. Destruction everywhere. Joseph's weapon cache has been raided.

Hiroku carefully walks around corners. Windows blasted out.

He steps onto the porch and looks into the woods behind the house.

As he turns back, ropes fly in from every direction slamming him into the rail of the porch. A crew of Night Clan ninjas cascade off the rooftop. Two others appear with Kei and Shinji in front of them.

HIROKU (CONT'D)

Don't touch them! They have nothing to do with this.

The ninjas release Kei. She walks closer to Hiroku.

HIROKU (CONT'D)

You okay? You okay?

Kei looks at Hiroku with sad eyes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KEI

I'm sorry I have to do this.

Kei takes a blindfold and wraps it over Hiroku's eyes.  
DARKNESS.

INT. NIGHT CLAN TEMPLE - DAY

Shiro sits looking out a glass window. He talks on a cell phone.

BOSS (O.S.)

Have you decided Shiro?

SHIRO

I'm thinking it over.

Shiro paces back and forth.

BOSS (O.S.)

Power must always change hands.  
That time is now.

The voice is that of the Boss of the Iron Circle.

SHIRO

I cannot betray my father.

The boss' voice is intense.

BOSS

He doesn't care about you. He cares  
about no one but himself.

Shiro sits silent on the phone.

VOICE

It's time to step out of his  
shadow.

Shiro SLAMS the phone into the wall. It SHATTERS.

He turns away from the window. Jin stands in the doorway.

SHIRO

Leave me alone.

JIN

Sorry sir. But I have some  
interesting news.

Shiro rubs his hands through his hair, frustrated.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHIRO

What?

JIN

Hiroku he has been captured.

SHIRO

The Wolf?

JIN

No.

(he pauses again)

Kei.

Shiro quickly stands up.

SHIRO

Has my father seen him yet?

JIN

No. I thought I would tell you first.

He walks past Jin.

SHIRO

Good. Keep this between us.

Shiro storms out of the room.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Hiroku is strapped to a metal chair. Loose wires are attached to his shirtless body.

SHIRO

You know, I've waited for this moment. You have caused me a lot of suffering.

(beat)

And now I will show you my pain.

Shiro turns up the juice and flips the switch. Hiroku's body violently CONVULSES.

Sweaty, but Hiroku maintains his composure.

HIROKU

You haven't changed at all.

SHIRO

Shut up! This time I will make sure you are dead.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HIROKU

You never could control yourself.

Shiro drags a knife over Hiroku's chest. He stops it over his heart, the edge of the knife looking straight down.

HIROKU (CONT'D)

No matter what you do, Takashima  
will never trust you, his own flesh  
and blood.

Shiro spits on Hiroku.

HIROKU (CONT'D)

He'll never respect you, unless you  
make him respect you.

Shiro sticks the knife into the table, pondering Hiroku's words.

SHIRO

This isn't over.

He leaves.

EXT. INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Kei stands with her back to the corner and listens to Shiro speak to Jin outside the room.

SHIRO

Where is my father?

JIN

He is in his chamber.

SHIRO

Keep an eye on him.

Shiro points at Hiroku and leaves.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jin walks in. Hiroku still strapped to the chair.

He walks to the electrical switch.

JIN

I admire you Hiroku.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Hiroku doesn't acknowledge him.

JIN (CONT'D)  
I always knew about you and Kei,  
even when nobody else did.

He flips the switch and shocks Hiroku.

JIN (CONT'D)  
It made me crazy that you were with  
her.

He turns the juice up again. Sending a volt through Hiroku's  
body.

Kei walks in through the door.

KEI  
What are you doing, Jin?

Jin turns.

JIN  
Kei, we were just talking about  
you.

Jin walks closer to Kei.

JIN (CONT'D)  
I always knew your allegiance was  
to your family. I knew you were the  
only one who could truly stop this  
beast.

KEI  
I'm here to take him to Father. Now  
go.

Jin comes closer to Kei.

JIN  
No one ever knew except me. I kept  
it a secret...because you mean so  
much to me.

Kei gives Jin a questioning look.

KEI  
What are you talking about?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JIN

You and Hiroku. It would be a shame if after all this I had to tell Takashima. He would never trust you again.

KEI

I've done nothing. Now stand down and go to your quarters.

Jin moves closer to Kei. He touches the small of her back.

JIN

Of course, Kei.

Jin walks away smiling at Hiroku.

She turns.

KEI

Jin, one more thing.

Jin turns.

JIN

Yes?

A smile plastered all over his face.

KEI

Don't ever touch me again.

Kei unleashes the throwing knife with dead aim into Jin's forehead.

He falls to his knees. With his eyes wide open, he breathes his last breath.

Kei rushes to Hiroku. She unties him from the chair.

KEI (CONT'D)

I didn't think Shiro would get to you this fast.

Hiroku smiles back.

HIROKU

Don't worry, I got to him first.

Hiroku stands.

INT. NIGHT CLAN TEMPLE - NIGHT

Shiro and twelve other ninjas march down the hall to Takashima's chambers.

They open the door and spread out.

INT. TAKASHIMA'S CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

Takashima and four of his loyal followers are waiting for Shiro. They stand ready to die.

Takashima steps forward.

TAKASHIMA

What is the meaning of this?

SHIRO

Your time is over.

TAKASHIMA

You will regret this.

SHIRO

You've given me no other choice.

TAKASHIMA

(yelling)

I'm the only master!

With blinding speed Takashima pulls out the Kuro blade. It slices clean through Shiro's sword. Takashima delivers a mighty blow to Shiro that sends him flying backwards.

An all out ninja brawl explodes.

Takashima ruthlessly dismantles many men. His entourage is the best of the best, they take down Shiro's men with ease.

The battle is quick and almost effortless for Takashima and his men. Shiro finds himself subdued by Takashima's mighty sword.

TAKASHIMA (CONT'D)

You've brought shame on this house.

And for this you will die.

Takashima swings his blade. Shiro's blood splatters against the wall.

EXT. NIGHT CLAN GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Kei and Hiroku stand, surrounded by the falling leaves of the Japanese maple trees.

HIROKU  
I have to do this alone.

KEI  
I know.

HIROKU  
Please take care of Shinji.

She nods. They embrace for the last time.

HIROKU (CONT'D)  
And find the life you wanted for  
us.

She looks into his eyes.

KEI  
Finish this.

Kei kisses Hiroku hard. She turns and disappears into a veil of blackness.

INT. NIGHT CLAN TEMPLE - CONTINUOUS

Hiroku walks through the empty halls of the temple. The place feels lifeless, broken. He makes his way towards Takashima's chamber.

INT. TAKASHIMA'S CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

A magnificent stained glass skylight illuminates the dark, foreboding Takashima in his throned chair, a god among devils. The PATTERN OF RAIN echoes through the room.

Two swords sit next to him, the Kuro and the Kaze.

TAKASHIMA  
So you've finally found me.

HIROKU  
For the last time.

TAKASHIMA  
Then come my son and meet your  
destiny.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Takashima throws Kaze at Hiroku. His robe flares up, as he jumps from his throne.

Hiroku runs full speed at the rising Takashima. They meet. Hiroku's force is tremendous, he tosses Takashima through the stained glass window and into the rainy night.

EXT. NIGHT CLAN TEMPLE ROOFTOP - NIGHT

A downpour of rain reflects in the moonlight outside the shattered window. The rooftop is a graveyard. Tombstones stretch out in every direction.

Takashima rises to his feet. Rain dripping from his long locks of hair.

TAKASHIMA

We're the same, Hiroku. We share  
the blood of vengeance.

Hiroku delivers a BONE-CRUNCHING blow to Takashima's face.

HIROKU

No. You wish for us to be the same.  
But we are not.

Takashima looks back at Hiroku, blood dripping off his lip.

TAKASHIMA

I made you what you are.

HIROKU

You made me a beast.

TAKASHIMA

I made you the best.

Takashima swiftly removes a double-bladed knife from his robe and stabs Hiroku in the side.

TAKASHIMA (CONT'D)

Your mother begged me to spare your  
life...and then I killed her.

He delivers another painful blow to Hiroku.

Hiroku remains calm. His whole body at peace, not even acknowledging the pain of Takashima's blows...or his words.

HIROKU

You have used the ancient art of  
our people to bring darkness to the  
world.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TAKASHIMA

The world brought darkness upon  
itself. I've accepted this and made  
a place for our way of life.

Takashima delivers a kick to Hiroku's chest. Hiroku SLAMS  
into a stone mausoleum. The rain pours down heavy.

HIROKU

Your way of life? You don't care  
about your family. All that guides  
you is revenge.

Takashima grabs Hiroku by the throat.

TAKASHIMA

Do not mistake revenge for justice.

He tosses Hiroku across the graveyard.

TAKASHIMA (CONT'D)

And justice is not for the weak.

Takashima punishes Hiroku with a hit to the jaw.

TAKASHIMA (CONT'D)

It's painful...

And another blow with the hilt of his sword.

TAKASHIMA (CONT'D)

and unforgiving...

Takashima slices through the air with the Kuro sword towards  
Hiroku head. Hiroku barely avoids the blow, spinning away and  
jumping to his feet.

TAKASHIMA (CONT'D)

...and it's something you know  
nothing about.

Hiroku turns and delivers a monster kick to Takashima's  
chest. Takashima CRASHES into a gravestone.

HIROKU

I know *this*. You will die just like  
your father...you will die at the  
hand of the Wind!

Takashima stands up, fuming.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Takashima moves in on Hiroku knocking Kaze away and attacking with wild fury.

TAKASHIMA  
Vengeance is all I've ever known  
because of you.

Hiroku blocks Takashima's punches and draws them closer to the temple's edge.

TAKASHIMA (CONT'D)  
What will you do without your  
legendary sword?

Takashima takes Kuro from it's sheath and drives into Hiroku's stomach.

Hiroku coughs up blood. He grabs the hilt of the sword and pulls Takashima closer to him.

HIROKU  
The blade of the Wind is not a  
sword at all.

With an almost effortless grace, Hiroku transfers all his energy to his fist and delivers the "Dim Mak" (Ninja Death Punch).

Takashima's chest is crushed by the monster punch.

He slumps backward. His grip on the Kuro sword the only thing keeping him from falling off the building.

The rain falls into the darkness below as Takashima hangs on.

SILENCE.

Takashima stares earnestly at Hiroku, his eyes still burning...life slipping away.

TAKASHIMA  
I always wished you were my own.

Takashima looks at Hiroku, closes his eyes one last time and lets go of the sword.

He falls away from Hiroku into the abyss below. His bearded face almost serene as he falls through the rain.

Hiroku stumbles backward. He pulls the Kuro from his own body and falls next to a grave. He wipes the blood clean from the sword.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Hiroku looks upon the rising sun. He smiles. The night slowly disappearing, the daylight bringing life to this temple of darkness.

Hiroku closes his eyes for the last time. A wind sweeps towards him, breaking his body apart into a spiral of colorful leaves.

EXT. NIGHT CLAN TEMPLE GROUND - CONTINUOUS

From the shadows a figure appears approaching Takashima's body. It is Joseph, wearing a red robe with a raven on his shoulder.

JOSEPH

Destiny my friend. We cannot escape it.

He pushes Takashima's eyes closed.

EXT. JAPAN COUNTRYSIDE - DUSK

A long Japanese country road is lined with cherry blossoms and a field of long reeds of grass blow in the wind.

Kei walks the path that Hiroku once walked. With her is Shinji. They stop. She kneels down and takes out the weathered book that had guided Hiroku. She flips it open to the last page.

INSERT - HAIKU

"The summer grasses!

All that remains

Of the warrior's dreams."

BACK TO SCENE

She touches her stomach, feeling the life inside of her and then takes Shinji's hand and continues on towards the hills that Hiroku had once walked, towards her future.

FADE OUT.